University of Alberta

The Use and Abuse of Jan Hus as an Historical Figure in Czech Culture

or

Cooking Your Own Goose: Three Czech Recipes

by

Tim Chodan

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

History

Department of History and Classics

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1999

National Library of Canada
Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Acquisitions et services bibliographiques
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-46969-7

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Tim Chodan

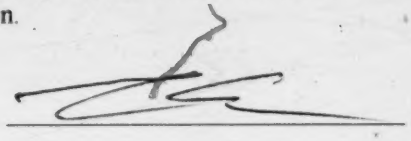
Title of Thesis: The Use and Abuse of Jan Hus as an Historical Figure in Czech Culture

(Cooking Your Own Goose: Three Czech Recipes)

Degree: Master of Arts

Year this Degree Granted: 1999

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.
The author reserves other publication rights and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.



10823-65 Avenue

Edmonton, Alberta T6H 1V8

Oct. 1st/99

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Cooking Your Own Goose: Three Czech Recipes" submitted by Tim Chodan in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

Dr. A. Gow

Dr. D. Sayer

Dr. J. P. Himka

Dr. J. Martin

Dr. N. Pylypiuk

Sept. 30th/99

To my friend James Davidson

a marvelously bright, lively, charismatic, and creative young man who died of cancer while I was doing my research in Prague. This small accomplishment for all those he had yet to make.

21.12.76 - 23.01.98

Abstract

This thesis considers both the continual reformation and use of the popular historical memory of Hus in Czech culture for various political purposes in three discrete periods: the mid nineteenth century; the beginning of the twentieth century; and the period immediately following World War II.

Preface

Jan Hus (1371-1415) was a Czech religious thinker, preacher and reformer. His opinions on many issues such as the ills of the contemporary Catholic Church, its possible reform, and the authority of scripture are so similar to those of John Wyclif and Martin Luther that Hus is often mentioned in the same breath as these more well known (outside of Central and Eastern Europe) historical figures. The Roman Catholic council of Constance declared both Hus' writings and the man himself to be heretical and Hus was burnt at the stake on the 6th of July, 1415.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following: the J. Gordin Kaplan Travel Award; Drs. Sayer, Himka, and Gow; Tim Gannon; Karen Foster; Andy Weaver; The Hron family; Karen, Keith and Annette Meagher; Zuzana Turková; Jaroslav Polaček; Žaneta Nováková and her family (Honza, and Hanas senior and junior); Greg Lemermeyer; Natalka Cmoc; Linda Affolder; Andrea Chodan and most especially my parents, Iris and Nick Chodan, without whom this thesis never would have been finished and certainly never would have been started.

The poet Paul Zimmer once said that any poem is a list. This list reads like a poem to me.

Edmonton, Alberta
October 1999

Table of Contents

Introduction	pg. 1
Chapter 1	pg. 12
Chapter 2	pg. 47
Chapter 3	pg. 85
Reflections	pg. 111
Bibliography	pg. 121

Introduction

"[T]hose who have subdued the past - they reach for the future with creative hand, and everything that is or has been for them becomes a means, an instrument, a hammer. Their knowing is *creating*." — Friedrich Nietzsche[1]

I had been researching the significance of Jan Hus in modern Czech history for about two months before I realized that his importance at any point throughout this history had less to do with the past than with the future. It was a 'lightbulb' moment. I no longer know where this realization lies on the scale of brilliant to banal, but I do know that it is central to the meaning of Hus throughout Czech history. Moreover, it is this element of Hus' meaning that addresses the historiographical questions concerning the use of history which have occupied my thoughts for years. Thus Hus as a symbol relating the present both to the ever receding past and the continually unfolding future forms the central thread of this thesis.

I often think of the present as a war for the future. We are constantly, as individuals and in groups, in ways both grand and small, trying to impose our vision of the future *on* the future. The front of this war spans the entire range of human experience, from the broad social, cultural, material/economic, and the narrowly political (laws, elections, parliaments

---

[1]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, transl. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, 1990, pp. 142-3.

and such) spheres, to the minutiae of daily living: how we dress and the jokes we tell.[2] This war for the future is what I think of as political in the very broadest sense of the word. Thus, in this introduction, the word "political" is used to denote this broader conception.

We contest the future along different channels in varying manners; each culture has its own makeup[3] in this regard. In Western Canada (at present), for example, a key mode of discourse is based on the notion of efficiency. Over time this concept has become established in the minds of many Albertans as a good of the highest order.[4] So, by inversion, if something is characterized as inefficient its future existence (as a program, institution, festival, etc.) is being seriously attacked. Questions of aesthetics, community identity, class, etc. may factor into the ensuing debate, but the issue of efficiency will almost assuredly play a prominent role in a way that, for example, it would probably not in France.

---

[2]Such things, in my view, are very political (though localized). For example, a professor who wears casual clothes instead of a suit and tie to work is, consciously or no, speaking volumes, even if he simply finds a suit and tie uncomfortable. He is casting his lot against established, though now fading, conventions which symbolize/enforce certain social distinctions, (excessive?) formality, conformity and more.

[3]I suppose one could think of this as the terrain of the front, to continue with the combat analogy. Cultures share modes of discourse on the construction of the future — history is an example of one of those quite commonly used — but they would still exhibit a unique 'pattern' (how powerful is each mode of discourse in comparison with others?, how and with what subtlety, or lack thereof, is it employed?, on what range of issues is it viable?, etc.) of these modes in collective use.

[4]The importance of this concept is written into the efficient, numbered, grid-like layout of the streets and avenues in which we live in a way that is similar to the way Czech history is (continually re-) written into the walls and street signs of Prague.

The field of history is one such mode,[5] but in Czech culture history has long been extraordinarily politically charged, and it has been, therefore, a crucial battlefield for the future. Why? To put it succinctly, the Czech past has been thought of as something to which the nation[6] should return in some way. It is the *past in the future* that has so politicized Czech history.

This might seem difficult to believe,[7] but the root of its explanation lies in the dominant matrix of ideas concerning nations and history — specifically the belief in nations as entities with souls or spirits and the meaning that the historically deduced character of these souls held with regards to the future — infused in the very foundations of Czech nationalist views of history.

A nation was a distinct, unified, living thing. The Czech nation was constantly

---

[5]Our interpretation of the past is necessarily political. In the starkest terms, who we think we were informs who we think we are and this, in turn, influences what we believe we can accomplish and how.

[6]Meaning here a group of people that views themselves as a nation, regardless of whether these people possess their own state. The word "nation" is henceforth used to denote such a meaning.

[7]It did seem so to the noted Marxist scholar Roman Rosdolsky. After confronting the evidence of similar historical determinism in Engel's writing, he asked incredulously, "[b]ut does the past really determine to so high a degree the future of a people?" (Roman Rosdolsky, *Engels and the Nonhistoric Peoples: The National Question in the Revolution of 1848*, transl. and ed. John-Paul Himka, Critique Books, Cambridge, 1987, pg. 111.) From his vantage point of the mid-twentieth century Rosdolsky rejected this strongly and immediately as untrue (Ibid.), but this does not address what I consider to be the larger historiographical question of whether Engels and many of his contemporaries would have answered Rosdolsky's question in the affirmative. Though I do not mean to suggest here that this particular form of historical determinism was always and everywhere considered true, I do think it was a strong, and perhaps even the central current in the wider stream of thought. Moreover, it was an established current with a strong 'gravity' operating as a sort of default — the way one naturally tended to think.

personified. Great men were said to speak with the voice of the nation. The nation, it was hoped, would awake, open its eyes and see the task before it. The nation could suffer and shed its blood. The Czech nation, with its good, faithful, true (etc.) sons and daughters, even seemed to take on the role of a father of mythical proportions.[8]

As such a living entity, a nation had a unique and distinct soul, and, because the soul or spirit was, by definition, the essence[9] of that nation, the national soul *contained* all that a nation was. Therefore, all that a nation was — including, crucially, its national character — could be comprehended from an understanding of that nation's soul or spirit.

Such an understanding was to be gained from a reading of the past. A nation's soul (and thus its character) was seen as something "eternal and unchanging,"[10] or at least as something beyond the normal, mortal flow of time. I think of this — in keeping with the conception of a nation as a quasi-immortal macro-person with a life spanning centuries, or even millennia, instead of decades — as analogous to the character of an individual. A person's character may change over time, new characteristics may develop and old

---

[8]Indeed the Czech nation, in the minds of nationalists, was like an immortal macro-person, composed of (I would say composed of the *belief* of) its individual, mortal micro-people.

[9]The idea that nations were possessed of an animating spirit is, of course, central to Hegel's influential work, *The Philosophy of History*. To be fair to Hegel, a sentence such as the preceding one does not fairly represent his thought. Hegel did think that the ideas of God used physical vehicles to interact and develop, but these vehicles could be individuals or groups (nations, religions). Still, I think the fingerprints of his metaphysical thinking on history are present in the work of many of his more nationally focused contemporaries and predecessors.

[10]Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", pp. 1-14 in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pg. 10.

qualities may be modified, but radical transformations are rare events. Therefore, just as we might deduce something of an individual's character by our knowledge of his or her past, so too could we determine the character of a nation's spirit. It was on the stage of history that a nation, through its actions and their outcomes, was believed to reveal its essential nature.

The historical process, however, knew no pity or mercy. In the struggle of history some of the 'more delicate blossoms'[11] were destined to fall before their more robust brethren nations; this was not only the nature of things, but good. The victorious forces in history were so not by accident but because they deserved to be: they were better. It was in the name of progress, of proper and inevitable historical development, that weaker nations (or "weak semi-nations,"[12] as Engels called them) withered, died and fertilized[13] the growth of the stronger.

It is readily apparent that the potential future consequences of this judgement of a nation's soul, and thus character, by history are fateful indeed. If the range of thought determines the range of action, then having one's nation deemed unhistorical[14] created the

---

[11]I am paraphrasing Hegel, who wrote that a world-historical actor "must trample down many an innocent flower - crush to pieces many an object in its path." Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, transl. J. Sibree, Dover, New York, 1956, pg. 32.

[12]Frederick Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism I-II", pp. 226-245 in *The Revolutions of 1848*, ed. David Fernbach, Random House, New York, 1973, pg. 235

[13]The "ruins of peoples who, so to speak, had to serve as fertilizer for other peoples' cultures" is how Rosdolsky characterized this view. Rosdolsky, pg. 113.

[14]As Czech Professor of History Jan Slavík once nicely explained this view: "Historical are those nations which have contributed something fundamental to the

space for a whole range of negative decisions and actions.[15] At stake was the viability,[16] and thus possibly the very existence, of every nation.[17]

Although there is a clear connection between the interpretation of the past and its possible effect on the future in the above it still does not fully explain the Czech case. The connection in Czech culture was all this and more, and the more came from the synergy of the above ideas with the particular Czech setting.

To begin with, the Czechs had an obvious period in their history to which they could look (and point) as evidence of the independent greatness they were capable of achieving and thus of their viability as a nation. During the middle ages, the Bohemian kingdom had prospered and often held a fairly important place in political affairs. The fact that this period lay centuries previous to the national revival entailed important consequences as well. Being distant and disconnected in time made the period more of an abstraction than

---

development of human culture. Only these nations have a right to life. The unhistorical nations, culturally infertile, have no prospects in the future." ("Historičtí jsou tí národové, kteří něčím podstatným přispěli k rozvoji lidské kultury. Jen ti mají právo na život. Národové nehistoričtí, kulturně neplodní, nemají vyhlídek do budoucnosti . . .") Jan Slavík, "Hus Palackého a Hus Pekařův" in *Svobodné Slovo* 6.7.1945.

[15]This century shows only too well what can be parlayed into action when such summary judgements of entire peoples become widely accepted.

[16]Why, for example, should the Czech language be given any recognition or rights, why should the Czechs be permitted to establish their own schools with their own curriculum, why should any (further) political rights be granted to the Czechs if this were merely 'standing in the way of progress' (that 'progress' being their germanization)? Why should they receive any international sympathy or support for such initiatives?

[17]I should like to make clear, too, that I do not think this was simply some sort of high stakes intellectual game played for a stage purely external to a culture. Participants in this contest passionately believed in these ideas as well and needed, first and foremost, to justify their nation to themselves.

recent history and thus easier to idealize.

The period of history immediately preceding the "awakening"[18] had not been so kind to the Czech nation, nor could the present state and circumstances, from a nationalist perspective, be characterized as glorious.[19] But this simply and strongly accentuated the desire to look into the nation's past: if the present was bleak, then all the more reason to look to the past for inspiration.

Using the past as a source of inspiration in the present is already an orientation of the past towards the future, and in claiming a period of that past as a period of glory, a height of which the nation *is capable*, is one not implicitly arguing that the nation *should* aspire to attain that greatness again? In the Czech case, yes.[20] In order to justify themselves as

---

[18]This is a term quite commonly attached to the beginnings of the Czech nationalist movement in (approximately) the last quarter of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century.

[19]Early 'awakeners' did more than just recognize this, they lamented it and even expressed fears of the imminent demise of Czech culture. This especially concerned its language, but then language held such an important place in the church of nationalism that the existence of a Czech nation, if the people spoke German, was highly debatable. In 1868 Palacký remarked, "[w]hen I first came to Prague it was actually true, as one of our countrymen said, that if all of us had been assembled in one place..., the whole national movement would have been destroyed if the roof had fallen in." (František Palacký, quoted in Stanley Buchholz Kimball, *Czech Nationalism: a Study of the National Theatre Movement, 1845-83*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1964, pg. 91.) Palacký may well have been exaggerating, but his point is clear. Czech nationalism was, as the author of the 1871 Report of the Prague Statistical Commission put it, "still in diapers" (quoted in Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1998, pg. 29) at this stage, and with it any clout that the Czech nation might wield as a political force.

[20]Turning to Palacký's influential work again, he clearly stepped across this already blurred (can/should) line. At the end of his introduction he remarked that it was his "heartfelt wish that God should so bless this work that it should greatly serve our nation to recognize itself, and in this become conscious of what it is and *what it should be*."

viable, to both itself and others, Czech nationalists needed to think of the present state of affairs as an aberration and the past as representative of the true nation. Moreover, if the nation were to justify not only its continued existence but its desire to become an historic actor on the European stage *in the future*, then this true character had to be thought of as something with which the nation had lost touch in some way but to which it was returning. The past, or more accurately the dominant interpretation of that past, thus became a goal, and any goal is necessarily located in the future. This is the past in the future to which I referred earlier.[21]

("...tužebné přání, aby bůh požehnati ráčil dílo tomuto, tak aby hojně posloužila národu našemu ku poznání sebe samého a k uvědomění se v tom, čím jest a čím býti má.") František Palacký, *Dějiny Národu Českého v Čechách a v Moravě*, díl I-VI, Bursík & Kohout, Praha, 1893, pg. lxii (emphasis mine).

[21]This accentuated the political importance of, and the cultural sensitivity towards, historical interpretation to an unusual degree. Indeed, I think of the Czech case as one of cultural 'clioriasis'; over- or hypersensitivity to history. An illustrative example that also supports my ideas about Hus comes readily to mind. On November 25th 1889, during a debate at the Czech Diet ("sněmovna Česka") on whether Hus' name should be included amongst plaques of the great figures from Czech history that now adorn the National Museum, Prince Karel Schwarzenberg condemned the suggestion and the Hussites as well as "a band of bandits and arsonists" ("bandu lupičův a žhářův"). When this was reported in the following day's *Národní Listy*, it provoked a storm of controversy. The issue dominated the news for weeks. On the 28th, one of the paper's editorials closed with the cry of "do not suffer this, Czech nation!" ("Netrp toho, národe český!") On the same day, unsolicited donations were telegraphed to *Národní Listy* (appearing in the paper on the 29th, but sent a mere two days after Prince Schwarzenberg's comments were reported) to erect a *monument*, and not just a plaque, to Hus. The donations began to pour in and the paper soon had to set up a running daily table to keep track of them (*Národní Listy*, 26-30, 11, 1889).

The above example is germane in the following respects. First, there is the reciprocal connection of Hus and the Hussites. During a discussion that concerns Hus, Prince Schwarzenberg sees fit to lambaste the Hussites, and the Czech press, and more importantly the general public, reflexively read this back as an attack on Hus. Second, this defamation of *Hus* is injurious to the Czech *nation*, as the editorial on the 28th made explicit. Third, it evidences my point about Czech 'clioriasis'. Why was this issue

Hus was a key to the future because of his meaning for the Czech people, a meaning intimately intertwined with that of the Czech spiritual character — the national soul. The reigning interpretation of Hus was therefore foundational to what the Czechs thought they should be like as a nation, and this in turn was critical to the continual war for the future. On the very political battlefield of Czech history, Hus has been a key location, a commanding feature that one needed to attempt to conquer and hold if one had thoughts of winning the day or even remaining on the field.

The following discussion considers three segments of this continual political struggle for the control of Hus' meaning as a cultural symbol. The first chapter focuses on with the initial flowering of Czech nationalism as a popular movement and the formative years preceding it (approximately 1848-1869). The second looks at the turn of the century (roughly 1895-1915), a time when Czech nationalism was in full bloom but also diversifying and even (further) fragmenting. The third chapter deals with the successful communist hijacking of Hus that followed the second world war (1945-1948). The concluding chapter contains some of my reflections upon this topic in both a personal, and historiographical, context.

---

important enough as to be (rather hotly) debated at the Czech Diet? Why did it arouse such passion?

To be frank, I often find this aspect of Czech culture to be farcical and/or discomfiting (with the above example leaning towards the former). At any rate, I am uncomfortably aware of the burden of history [what Mircea Eliade termed "the increasingly powerful pressure of contemporary history" or even "the terror of history" (*The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History*, transl. Willard R. Trask, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1991, pp. 141, 161.)] when in the Czech Republic. I suppose this, in a way, is simply the logical product of the interaction of my upbringing in a culture that so willfully disregards its past with a culture that has invested so much in it.

Before going any further, however, I would like to be clear about what these essays are not and do not pretend to be. This project is not an exhaustive and definitive examination of Hus in Czech cultural history. As such a key symbol, Hus has generated a huge body of artifacts which evidence his meaning in Czech culture throughout time. These sources span the visual arts (sculpture, painting), music, the media (newspapers and magazines), literature (film, theater, poetry and prose), and the realm of history writing. I have focused on the latter category, although I have ventured into other areas, most notably the media and literature. Still, the overwhelming majority of sources are written and are from the realms of either history or the media. Even so, the coverage of these areas is not exhaustive.

This regrettable lack of thoroughness obviously extends to the temporal realm as well. I should confess that I am no longer so sure regarding my initial choice of what I then considered to be the three best periods upon which to concentrate my research. That is, after casting curious researching glances into other periods of Czech history, I now suspect that every epoch is immediate to Hus. He was a continuously important and meaningful symbol in the Czech cultural milieu, and an examination of this symbol and how it interacts with its surrounding culture would prove historiographically fruitful for any period. Furthermore, I now fully realize that one would need to look at Hus' afterlife as a symbol as a complete, organically developing whole, and not just at segments of it, in order to get a better grasp of its use and meaning than these essays can provide.

But enough of what this thesis is not. This thesis *is* an unapologetically impressionistic exploration of Hus as "a means, an instrument, a hammer" for forging the future in Czech

culture in three different periods. And so I turn to the earliest of these.

Chapter I

Wasn't that a party?

It is the early afternoon of July 2nd 1868, and people begin to gather on the lower half of *Václavské náměstí*. It is a summer in which Bohemia, and especially Prague, are caught up in a romance of nationalism. On the 14th of June, František Palacký passes into his 70th year and for a week surrounding the events telegrams flood into *Národní Listy* praising the man lavishly as a teacher, leader or even father of the nation. Something as ordinary as a birthday has been turned into a powerful, nationalist event.

It is of course less than two months after the laying of the foundation stone for the *Národní divadlo*, a spectacle that has been called "the greatest nationalist celebration the Czechs, up to that time, had ever experienced."[1] Tens of thousands, from in and outside of Prague, took part in a ceremony so intricately laced with nationalist undertones that even the water used to mix the mortar for the foundation stones was drawn from a well with nationally historic symbolic meaning.[2]

Most important, though, is how the demand for this celebration began to wildly outstrip its supply. The organizing committee had to scramble to find accommodation and to build

---

[1]Jakub Malý, quoted in Stanley Buchholz Kimball, *Czech Nationalism: a Study of the National Theatre Movement, 1845-1883*, Pg. 80.

[2]The well was reputed to have been used by Cyril and Methodius.

stands for the unexpectedly large number that attended.[3] The committee found itself continually readjusting important elements of the ceremony due to patriotically irrefutable suggestions 'from below'. The most famous example of this concerns the foundation stone itself. Originally, a stone taken from *Řip*[4] had been planned as *the* foundation stone. Nineteen foundation stones ended up being laid because people from around Bohemia and Moravia (and even from America) began donating stones from other mytho-historically meaningful places, and the committee was simply forced to cope. Strong and informed nationalist sentiment had undeniably taken hold in a large, broad spectrum of the population.

Imagine the scene on *Václavské náměstí* on July 2nd a few hours later. The lower half is full to overflowing. Hired carriages have arrived, decked out in the Czech national colors (red and white, at the time) and flying banners bearing the images of the Hussite chalice. The carriages form into a procession that winds its way very slowly through the streets of Prague. People crowd the streets and hang out of windows to catch a glimpse of it, calling out "Na zdar!" ('To success!') and "Slava Husovi!" ('Glory to Hus') as the carriages go by.

Hours later, the carriages have finally made their way to *Smíchovské nádraží*, where thousands of people are waiting. The police and the secret police are in attendance. As the 300 or so pilgrims make their way from the carriages to the train cars, they are again

---

[3]Over 60 000 participated. The committee had originally planned on approximately 10 000. See Kimball, pp. 82-3.

[4]*Řip* is a hill in north-central Bohemia from whose top "the great Czech forefather" ("*Praotec Čech*") is supposed to have claimed the Bohemian lands for his people.

greeted with shouts of "*Na zdar*!" and "*Slava Husovi*!" from the assembled spectator/participants. As the decorated train pulls away from the station, those assembled send the pilgrims off to the patriotic tune of "*Hej Slované*!" ('Hey, Slavs!').

The train heads westward, and in the various Czech towns and cities in which it stops, even in the middle of the night, it is greeted by a crowd waving flags and banners, dressed in *národní kroje* (national costume), shouting nationalist slogans and singing patriotic songs. The train is taking its passengers to Lindau, Switzerland, whence, after spending a night, they will take a boat to Constance. This is the first Czech "*pout' do Kostnice*" ("pilgrimage to Constance"). It has been organized and advertised for weeks before the event by a special committee that included such luminaries as the writer Karel Sabina (later proven an informant for the Austro-Hungarian secret police) and the (then quite young) publisher Jan Otto to commemorate the anniversary of the burning of Jan Hus.

In Constance, loaded, patriotic speeches are given, toasts are made, wreaths are lain, and the whole event, from start to finish, is lavishly covered by the Czech press — page one copy in *Národní Listy* for days. Nor is this the only marking of the day. "Jan Hus" a play by the famous writer Josef Kajetán Tyl, is staged in a few places. In Prague and other cities, assemblies are held, speeches are delivered, and pyres are burned.[5]

Where did all this come from? In July of 1867, some notice was taken of the anniversary but certainly nothing of this magnitude. Going back earlier in the 1860's hardly any public attention was paid to the anniversary. In July of 1861 and of 1865, for example, there

---

[5]The preceding sketch of the 1868 pilgrimage to Constance has been drawn from the pages of *Národní Listy*, 5-12.6.1868.

were small notes in *Národní Listy* mentioning services in honor of Hus held at a Protestant church (and attended, even, by a few Roman Catholics), but nothing in the years surrounding these. Going back even further in time, say, to the 1830s, we would find the largely Roman Catholic population of Bohemia and Moravia viewing Hus as a heretic, as an historical figure to be shunned or at least regretted, but certainly not celebrated.

Throwing fears of teleology to the winds for the moment, I cannot help but wonder how this change occurred. How did this come to be?

Changes

In any investigation of this question, the 1st section (the 11th book) of the 3rd volume of Palacký's *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a na Moravě* figures prominently.

Palacký's reinterpretation of Hus did not dramatically spring forth from an entirely condemnatory wasteland. As early as the late 18th century, certain Bohemian intellectuals had begun to write of Hus and even of the Hussites in a more favorable light. This was not without reservation, however. Josef Dobrovský found the religious fanaticism of the period distasteful.[6] The historian Mikuláš Adaukt Voigt wrote in his biography of Hus "What right have we to expel from the number of our native scholars a man who truly possessed understanding and learning, only because he misused his capabilities and

---

[6]"Since his interest was primarily linguistic and historical rather than religious, Dobrovský did not exclude Hus and his followers from their rightful place in the history of Czech literature; but the religious fanaticism of the period was distasteful to him." Hugh LeCaine Agnew, *Origins of the Czech national renascence*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1993, pg. 114.

learning, mixed truth with falsehood, and finally fell completely into error?"[7] Even František Martin Pelcl — otherwise quite sympathetic to Hus — betrayed the telltale influence of nearly two centuries of mistrust towards the arch-heretics. "To be sure, they were Hussites," he wrote, "but they still believed in Christ, and venerated his Holy Mother and Saint Václav."[8] These were are all laurels bestowed guardedly.

In contrast, Palacký's reconfiguration of Hus in Czech history is unflinchingly positive —he wrote glowingly of the Czech Reformer. When I think of Palacký's Hus,[9] the words intelligent, erudite, caring, thoughtful, honest, brave and self-sacrificing come to mind. Nor did Palacký (himself a Protestant) waiver in this regard. It is crystal-clear throughout Hus' time at Constance, through characterization, association and behavior, that Hus was wearing the 'white hat'.[10] Moreover, Hus captures and holds Palacký's spotlight, center stage, from just before the Kutna Hora decree of 1409 until his death in 1415; he is *the* protagonist in the story of the Czech nation. Palacký's Hus is both a nationalist hero and the equivalent of a Protestant saint.

Earlier 'awakeners' such as Pelcl and Voigt had injected a new, nationalist axis of

---

[7]The biography was a part of a larger collection of biographies of Czech historical figures produced by Voigt, Pelcl and Ignác Born in the years 1773-75. Voigt, quoted in Agnew, pg. 97.

[8]Pelcl, quoted above, pg. 43.

[9]See, for example, the lengthy description on pg. 45, vol. III.

[10]It is also abundantly clear just who the 'baddies' are. The papacy and the whole council come off as almost (were they not so corrupt, authoritarian and malevolent) farcical. The other 'black hat' character is, of course, the German nation.

interpretation into the inertial reading of Hus along religious lines.[11] Palacký elevated this new axis to the point where it confronted the longer-standing religious interpretation as an equivalent and at times even a superior force on the stage of late medieval Czech history.

While not revolutionary, Palacký's reconfiguration pushed the envelope of Hus' nationalist reclamation to a much more intense level. This reinterpretation, in combination with the towering stature of Palacký in mid-19th century Czech cultural life, and the consequent *substantial* weight his historical views carried, generated an appreciable shift in the entire cultural arena of meaning regarding Hus.[12] Roman Catholics writing on Hus after 1846 could disagree (to varying lengths) with Palacký, but they could not ignore him.[13] Moreover, even in these confrontations, Catholics, like retreating generals, conceded ground to the advancing Protestant-cum-nationalist interpretation.

Perhaps the most obvious example of this is Václav Vladivoj Tomek.[14] In his two

---

[11]Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, pg. 77.

[12]Rather widespread knowledge of the long and bitter dispute over the style and content of the 1st section of the 3rd volume that Palacký had waged with various Austrian censors (Palacký submitted the section in two parts in 1843 and 1844. Both endured a year of wrangling before clearing, with alterations, the hurdle of censorship.) did nothing but fuel the fires of public curiosity and anticipation with which the eventual publication was received. This, in all ironic probability, did nothing but enhance both the 'popularity' and influence of the work. See Josef F. Zacek, "Metternich's Censors: The Case of Palacký", pp. 95-112 in *The Czech Renascence of the Nineteenth Century*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1970, pp. 109-110.

[13]Even Josef Alex Helfert explicitly placed his work in opposition (and it is hard to imagine an opinion of Hus more diametrically opposed) to that of Palacký. See the Foreword to his *Mistr Jan Hus aneb Počátkové Církevního Rozdvojení v Čechách*, Nákladem Musea Království Českého, Praha, 1857, (Foreword unpaginated).

[14]And, perhaps as well, understandably so. Tomek was Palacký's pupil and even tutored his children. The relationship between the two men was close and trusting enough

monographs of 1849 and 1850[15] Tomek was bluntly critical of the corrupt state of the Roman Catholic church in the early fifteenth century, and this justifies Hus and his actions somewhat. At the very least, it subtly shifts some of the blame away from him and on to the clergy, high and low. More important than these concessions, though, is the fact that they reveal a conflict occurring within Tomek: his religion was at odds with his patriotism.

Although the religious side of Tomek eventually wins out in his histories, it is not without a good deal of 'bumping and bruising'. Up until the beginning of 1412, Tomek's description of Hus is very sympathetic. It is only after Hus begins to directly oppose the Pope's authority on the issue of indulgences that Tomek judges Hus to have gone too far; even here, however, there is sympathy for Hus, who is seen as a well-intentioned if overzealous man, provoked by the disgraceful degree of decay and corruption in the holy mother church. While Tomek did give the justification of the judgement upon Hus from a proper, Roman Catholic point of view, it is one that seems to lack any passionate conviction; at least, it certainly seems dry in comparison with his earlier praise of Hus.

The Catholic priest P. Neumann is another example. While bluntly blaming the Czech religious rupture for "the worst evil"[16] ever visited upon Bohemia, Neumann still follows

---

that, in his mentor's absence, Tomek (along with Pavel Josef Šafařík) was even left in charge of the 'renovation' of the aforementioned work on Hus demanded by the Austrian censors.

[15]The two works are: *Děje university Pražské*, Tiskem knížecí arcibiskupské knihtiskárny, Praha, 1849, and *Děje království českého*, 6th edition, nákladem Knihkupectví Fr. Řivnáče, Praha, 1891(originally published in 1850).

[16]"Nejhorší zlé v Čechách zplodila roztrž církevní." Pant. Neumann, *Stručný Dějepis Český*, náklad Jaroslav Pospíšil, Praha, 1866, pg. 57.

suit in elevating the nationalist elements within his history to a plane level with that of the religious. In so doing, he cannot help but show some sympathy to Hus. Neumann is still guarded, to be sure,[17] but his complete failure to castigate or blame Hus in any way reveals more. Instead, he finds a scapegoat in King Václav IV and, again, shifts the blame away from Hus.

Even Helfert, writing from Vienna and under the encouraging umbrella of the Bach regime,[18] — a man who dared to claim that Hus had actually screamed in pain while being burned alive (instead of singing a song in praise of the virgin Mary), and who dubbed Hus "the martyr of errors and disobedience" — was forced to at least concede a few points. Helfert was candid about the church in the time of Hus suffering from "disorder and vice." Surely Hus was possessed of many "human frailties," but, Helfert asked, "should this prevent us from valuing those facets of his character which were truly praiseworthy?" The answer was, not entirely. "Hus was a man of uncommon spiritual gifts and... [had] a sincere zeal for those things which he held as true."[19]

---

[17]The only explicit praise is second hand. Neumann mentions the outrage of the Czech nobility at the disgrace of having "the teacher of their whole nation" burned by "foreigners." "Tu otcům církevním a císaři Sigmundovi zazlili čeští pánové, majíce za to, že upálením učitelovým celý národ od cizozemců byl potupen..." Ibid., pg. 60.

[18]It is worth noting that, a scant decade after its publication, *Národní Listy* dismissed Helfert's work with the terse sentence (to paraphrase): May the God of the Czechs forgive the Matice for the sin of its publication! ("Matice vydala Helfertova 'Husa', kteryžto hřích Matici sám Bůh Čechův odpušť!") *NL*, 11.7.1867.

[19]All from Helfert, pp. 212-216. In Czech the quotes read as follows: "...mučennika bludu a neposlušenství", "...nepořádkům a nešestem", "...křehkosti lidské", "Smí-li nám to překážeti abychom vážili těch stran charakteru jeho které v skutku byly chvalitevné?", "Hus byl muž neobyčejných darů ducha a ... poctivou horlivost o věc kterou za pravou měl."

Palacký's influence entailed more than just a curtailing of the more critical, Roman Catholic version of Hus; his work opened up a good deal of room on the more positive side of the cultural arena as well. In 1850, Karel Havliček espressed the desire that "our entire nation should again recognize in Hus its most faithful friend and father, who for his love of the Czech nation and the greatest truth of human worth, paid with his own life." He further stated that "Hus' portrait should hang in the home of every true Czech," for Hus was "an example to be followed."[20]

The playwright Josef Kajetán Tyl, in his *Jan Hus* (1848), was even more laudatory.[21] Characters in the play repeatedly refer to Hus as their "star" or "sun" or "light". One even refers to Hus as "the Czech Messiah."[22] Still, the most extreme of the 'positives' to follow Palacký was that of Emmanuel Arnold. In a series of articles published in *Občanské Noviny* in 1848-49, Arnold seemed to view Hus as a 15th century progenitor of the French

---

[20]"... aby náš celý národ v mistru Janu Husovi poznal zase svého nejvěrnějšího přítele a otce, jenž lásku svou k národu českému a k pravdě největší lidskou cenou — svým životem zaplatil.", "Obraz mistra Jana neměl by v žádném obydlí pravého Čecha chyběti...", "...co příklad ... k následování..." Karel Havliček-Borovský, "Mistr Jan Hus", in *Naše Knihovna*, no. II, ed. Frant. S. Frabša, Antonin Švejnara, Kladno, 1904, pp. 19-20.

[21]Ingeniously, Tyl greatly strengthens his overall acclamation of Hus through the inclusion of characters that express points of view opposed to Hus. Tyl's subsequent and utter discrediting of these messengers and/or their message results in a much more favorable impression of Hus than if he had chosen to ignore or downplay those opposed to Hus. This opposition, of course, also serves his dramatic purpose well.

[22]"LUPÁČ: ...Betlém, z něhož vyjde český Mesiáš." Josef Kajetán Tyl, "Jan Hus: Dramatická báseň v pěti odděleních", pp. 97-211 in *Spisy Josefa Kajetána Tyla*, vol. XX, ed. Antonin Grund, Knihovna Klasiků, Praha, 1954, pg. 101.

Revolution: Hus, and the Hussites as well, had stood for *liberté, egalité et fraternité*.[23]

These views all unequivocally praise Hus, but such flattering portrayals are simply the contours of the more important form of Hus' new meaning. In all of the three immediately preceding views of Hus there is a conspicuous, vital symbolism that is being simultaneously believed and forged. It was, moreover, a symbolism that was becoming increasingly pervasive.

Soul Man

One of the most immediately striking things about this symbolism is the fact that Hus is consistently and unambiguously patriated to the Czech nation. Czechs repeatedly refer to Hus as "ours": he is claimed, possessed, and much is implied in this possession.

First there is the question of whether one was or was not a Czech, for if Hus is a Czech property, then a Czech should(/must?) value him. There is a nationalist dynamic of in/exclusion that strongly accompanies Hus' symbolic meaning. Karel Vladislav Zap, in his 1862 popularization of Palacký's more academic work,[24] consistently refers to the (whole) Czech nation or the (entire) Czech people as loving Hus, as outraged by the Church's ban on him, or as valiantly defending Bethlehem chapel against a mob of angry Germans. The

---

[23]See Emanuel Arnold, *Sebrané spisy*, ed. Dr. Václav Osvald, Státní Nakladatelství Politické Literatury, Praha, 1954.

[24]This work was entitled "The Czech-Moravian Chronicle." In my research I used an extract about Hus and the Hussites published in 1866 (and subsequently republished in honor of the 1868 pilgrimage to Constance). Karel Vladislav Zap, *Vypsání husitské války*, Nákladem kněhkupectví: I. L. Kober, Praha, 1866.

Czech nation seems to act and respond as a unit.

Others, elsewhere, were more explicit. A telegram sent to the *Národní Listy* in 1868 pledged that "the whole nation prays... over your grave." Sabina, in one of his speeches at Constance in that year stated that "Hus' thoughts ennobled the entire nation in its ardour...," and the paper's editors went farther, writing that Hus' truth would "redeem our whole nation".[25] The character of Chlum in Týl's *Jan Hus* speaks passionately of his duty to "bring [Hus] back to all of the nation!"[26] The inescapable totality of these statements is persistent and begs a question: was one a good/faithful/true Czech if one was not pro-Hus?

The idea of being "věrný" (faithful, loyal) was constantly being interwoven with the proper reverence of Hus. The 1868 pilgrims, to take one example, were hailed as "faithful Czechs." In contrast, when the reporter for *Národní Listy* asked one of the (evidently not so) secret policemen present if he would be going to Constance, he replied cooly, "I wouldn't have anything to do there."[27] This, and the claims by the police that they were only present to protect those assembled from thieves, were handled with subtle, cold sarcasm by the paper. If what it was to be Czech was being continually reformed into what

---

[25]"Ty pak svatý mistře, nad jehož hrobem se zbožnými poutníky modlí se celý národ...", "Myšlenka Husova vzňala se v zápalu celého národa...", "...spasit celý národ náš." *NL*, 8, 10.6.1868

[26]"CHLUM: ... mám [Husa] přivést nazpět všemu národu!" Týl, 189

[27]"...vérných Čechův...", "'Tam bych neměl co dělat.'", *NL* 5.7.1868.

is analogous to an amorphous island in an ocean of identity,[28] then to have a negative or non-opinion of Hus was quickly being equated with, at the very least, getting one's trousers wet by venturing a little too close to the surf.

The second theme evident in Hus' possession is the achieved presence of a man dead nearly five hundred years; however it is more than this. Hus attains the closeness of a genetic relative. He is referred to as a Czech "son" and even as a "father." Miloslav Hurban, in one of his speeches at Constance, stated that "[we are] his sons, the Czech nation."[29] The Czech nation, dead and living, was as one family in which Hus occupied a prominent place as a "great son" or even "father".

The manner of Hus' presence was, furthermore, filled with meaning. He was thought of as an example to be followed or a model to be emulated. One of the many telegrams to the *Národní Listy* in 1868 pledged, "[a]ccording to Your example, holy martyr, we wish to fight and strive, firmly and openly, for our right and freedom."[30] In his concluding speech to those assembled at Constance, Josef Václav Frič referred to Hus as a "model," as an "ideal" guiding the Czech nation, like a star, from ever becoming too far "lost" in the future. And, at the conclusion of Frič's speech, in a wonderful symbolic gesture, the pilgrims physically walked the same path that Hus was thought to have walked from

---

[28]I am, of course, playing on Derek Sayer's analogy for Czech identity in the title of his *The Coasts of Bohemia*.

[29]The full quote is rather interesting. "Hus je pravým otcem literatury, on zanechal po sobě národu svému takový příklad který když následovati budou snyové jeho, národ český, vždy se obnovovati bude." *NL* 9.6.1868.

[30]"Dle Tvého příkladu svatý mučenníku chceme pevně a odhodleně za naše právo a svobodu bojavati a mříti." Ibid.

Constance to his execution.[31]

One would be correct in detecting a strong mystical element to this presence. One telegram exhorts, "Hus' spirit, be with us!" Another simply states that "[h]is spirit lives amongst us." The nature of mortal time and being have been obliterated, and Hus has become something ethereal and eternal. Both Sabina and the *Národní Listy* editors stated that Hus was never to be forgotten. Multiple telegrams speak of Hus' immortal presence and one promises that "Hus shall remain, unforgettable, in the heart of the nation."[32]

And Hus *was* in the heart of the nation. When Czechs referred to Hus as their knight, hero, teacher or representative, when he was written of as a pillar, a rock or a foundation of the Czech nation, it is not simply the Czechness in *him* that was being affirmed. There was an implied reciprocation here: Hus was in Czechness as well. There is a wonderful scene closing Act II, scene 3 of Tyl's *Hus*, where King Václav and Hus are alone immediately prior to Hus' departure for Constance. Václav lovingly grasps Hus' hands as he speaks, and it is clear from Týl's very sympathetic portrayal of Václav — a legitimate, well-intentioned, *Czech* King with the interests of his subjects at heart — that the king's words ring with authority. "We are always yours," Václav pledges, "and so shall we

---

[31]*NL* 10.6.1868.

[32]"Duch Husův budiž s námi!", "...duch jeho ale žije mezi námi.", "Nezapomenutelným zůstává v srdci národa..." *NL* 9.6.1868.

remain!"[33] The Czech nation possessed, but was also possessed by, Hus[34].

It is this location of Hus in the heart or essential core of the nation that is the key to his meaning and power as a politico-cultural symbol. If Hus is essential to Czechness, then the nation should conform to him — his thoughts, goals, qualities — for this *is* (what should be, at least) Czech. Historical interpretation of Hus was therefore staking a claim upon something intangible, but nonetheless fundamental, in the Czech future.

Political World

Traits or aspirations desired of the Czech populace by nationalists were consequently both seen and posited in Hus. Czechs, seeing Hus as a central determiner of their identity, *moved* towards these aims, and in seeing and believing these qualities to be integral to their Czechness, they (partially, at least) incorporated them through the powers of self-fulfilling prophecy. This created a feedback loop which reinforced the original dynamic. As Czech culture became less of a creation limited in scope to a small group of intellectuals and more of a functioning environment,[35] succeeding generations of Czech cultural leaders

---

[33]"VÁCLAV [to Hus]: (Laskavě my ruku podávaje.) Vzdyť jsme svoji —a tak zůstanem." Tyl, pg. 138.

[34]I am reminded of Hegel: "[T]he history of this State, [is] *their* [history]; what their ancestors produced belongs to them and lives in their memory. All is their possession, *just as they are possessed by it*; for it constitutes their existence, their being." Hegel, pg. 52 (emphasis mine on "just as they...")

[35]Macura has written that in the first half of the 19th Century, "Czech culture was for a Czech intellectual much more his own creation than a milieu he entered from outside." Vladimír Macura, "Problems and Paradoxes of the National Revival", pp. 182-

who had been raised with the conception of Hus as a primary source of Czech identity would, in their turn, reinterpret Hus as well.

This explains the nationalism read back into Hus both in terms of its magnitude and form. The trend of elevating the nationalist thread in both Hus and his historical environment increased. Zap baldly stated that "Hus struggled not so much for reform in the Church, but for natural, Czech language and national rights[;] amongst his countrymen he was the most fearless and active patriot."[36] Indeed, as already mentioned, this trend became so pervasive that even Roman Catholics found themselves swept up in it. A desire for reform along national and not so much religious lines was what concerned prominent figures in the Czech community in the 19th century, and so this was what was excavated from the past, regardless of the distortion committed upon it.

And Hus was an ideal candidate for the new, ethnic brand of Czech nationalism.[37] He was a man of and for the people. His rural, peasant origin and life long concern with Czech people of all stations meshed perfectly with the conception of a nation whose heart and soul were the common folk (and especially those of the countryside).[38] Hus also

---

197 in *Bohemia in History*, ed. Mikuláš Teich, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pg. 186.

[36] "Hus horlil netoliko pro opravu v církvi, ale též pro přirozená práva národnosti a jazyka českého, byl' on nejúčinlivějším a nejsmělejším vlastencem mezi svymi krajany..." Zap, pg. 2.

[37] This as opposed to the "land patriotism" (attachment/loyalty to a 'homeland') that was still very much alive and well as a competing conception of "nationalism" as late as the first half of the 19th century.

[38] According to mytho-nationalist legend it was the rural commoners that had kept the flame of the Czech language/nation alive during the period of *temno* ("darkness")

offered a good fit with regards to the centrality of language in 19th century Czech nationalism. He had modernized Czech writing by adapting the Roman alphabet (with diacritics) to serve the needs of the Czech language, written often in Czech and defended the "purity" of the Czech language against the influence of German[39]. Historical portrayals of Hus reflected what the Czech nationalist movement had long been becoming — a broad movement with language at its core. Granted such a key role in the story of the Czech language, Hus' place in the Czech nation was being more deeply rooted and spiritualized as well.

As already mentioned, interpretations of Hus also served to reinforce/create the desired singularity of the Czech nation. The nation was/should be united behind great men that led them and which they faithfully followed and supported. As a symbol, therefore, Hus implicitly helped reinforce a power base for the Czech cultural and political hierarchy.

Hus the symbol further amplified this nationalist power by directing it. It is more, too, than the obvious buttressing of ethnic division and antagonism that was inevitably read back into Hus and the history made to surround him, though this is important. While contemporaries generally (in the public eye, at any rate) viewed the Germans, Czechs and

---

proceeding from the defeat of the Czech estates at the battle of *Bilá Hora* ("White Mountain", 1620) until it could again be revived by the "awakeners". These common people were, of course, a much more attractive and convenient abstract idea and tool while others could still speak about and *for* them with impunity.

[39]Hus' achievements on behalf of the Czech language were swiftly becoming a point that, more than any other, the Roman Catholics simply had to acknowledge. The otherwise drab, short and obviously Catholic entry on Hus in Rieger's Encyclopedia views this aspect of Hus in a positive light as did Tomek, Neumann and even Helfert. See the entry on Hus in *[Riegerův] Slovník naučný*, XI vols., Kober, Prague, 1860-1874, pg. 983.

possibly even Jews as equally "at home"[40] in the present-day lands of the Czech crown, some peoples seemed to be more at home than others in the past.

Hus and his story (were made to) exemplify this. Writing about the disagreements that, in part, led to the Kutna Hora decree (1409), Zap stated that "[t]he Germans — in Prague as around the rural parishes where they had long ago settled — who had always inclined more towards the German empire than to things domestic and patriotic, agreed with the foreigners. Only the Poles and other Slavs at the university stuck with the Czechs."[41] This is a rich quote that questions the loyalty of German "settlers", but Zap implied more with the following: "And there arose amongst the Czechs the rightful request... that during all negotiations at the university thereafter the Czechs should enjoy three votes and the foreign nations should content themselves with one."[42] Just where did the Bohemian Germans stand? Were they at home in the Czech lands, or were they to be counted as foreigners, as settlers in Czech lands?

---

[40]"Of the three home nations in Bohemia (though the Jews, generally more worthy of being considered a religious community, are conceded to be one of the nationalities of this land in which they are settled), only the Czechs and Germans have their own *regions*, while the Jews are dispersed throughout." ("Z tří domácích národů v Čechách (z nichž vlastně Židy toliko za náboženský spolek vážiti sluší, přiznávající se celkem k národnosti té krajiny, v níž usazeni jsou) mají toliko Čechové a Němci své *pole*, kdežto Židé vesměs v různosti (diaspoře) přebývají.") *Čechy, země i národ*, ed. Dr. Fr. L Rieger, I. L. Kober, Praha, 1863, pg. 109.

[41]"S cizinci souhlasili všickni Němci jak v Praze tak i po klášteřích a po venkově v Čechách ode dávna osedlí, kteří vždy více k říši Německé nežli k věcem domácím a vlastenenským se klonili. S Čechy drželi na universitě jen Poláci a jiní Slované." Zap, pg. 6.

[42]"I vznikla v Češích spravedlivá žádost, aby se to nyní obrátilo... aby při všem jednání na universitě napotom Čechové tří hlasův užívali, a cizí národové jakožto přespolní aby se společně jedním hlasem spokojili..." Ibid., pg. 8.

Through the words of King Václav IV's decree, quoted at length, Zap hinted at an answer. The King refers to the "Czech nation" as "the true inheritors of this land."[43] The Czechs were *most* at home in the Czech lands, and both the Kutna Hora decree and the wider dispute between 'Germans' and 'Czechs' at the university that contextualized it acted as a lightning rod for these sorts of statements. Due to the manner in which the Czech culture tended to view their past generally and Hus specifically, this sort of historical judgement created an insistent, eroding influence on the existing acknowledgment of equality.

Still, efforts were made so as not to present Hus as a jingoist or fanatic. Hus' comment to the effect that "a good German is dearer to me than a bad Czech, even were he to be my own brother," was often brought up in this regard. This is a glimpse of a key facet of Hus extending beyond his nation and into the realm of (European) humanity. Hus is frequently connected with words such as "fraternity," "equality," and "humanism."

In fact, Hus was almost always presented with a strongly humanist side. This was critical, because Czech nationalists were playing in an auditorium whose balconies stretched beyond Bohemia, or even the Empire. At the heart of this humanism was Hus' education, intelligence and reliance on reason. The abysmal failure of the Prague revolution of 1848 convinced nearly everyone of the futility of achieving national

---

[43]"...národ Český, pravý této země dědic..."" Quoted in Ibid., pg. 10. Throughout these pages Zap downplays the political intrigue that composed both a powerful backdrop and instigating factor to the events at Kutna Hora.

advancement through violent means.[44] If the national movement was to be successful it would have to be from inside the system, by inches and yards: they would need, for example, to establish their own schools in every field in which the Germans had (and especially in those which they dominated) with their own curriculum, which Czechs would need to master in order to compete with them in the fields of industry, science, business, the Imperial bureaucracy, etc. as a *nation*. The Czech nationalists needed a non-violent struggle.

Hus' character and behavior were almost always characterized as gentle and peaceful,[45] but this shone through most clearly during the presentation of his most difficult trial —his appearance before the church council at Constance. Even though he is treated disgracefully (by Western standards of the 19th and 20th centuries, at any rate) Hus responds like a 15th century incarnation of the spirit of Gandhi. Placed in a dungeon and offered no genuine hearing of his position (he is merely ordered to recant), Hus simply but resolutely pleads for the council to show him where and how he has erred. If they do, he gladly offers to recant, but if they do not his conscience will not allow it. Hus became a symbol of reason standing against unquestionable, absolute authority and tradition. The

---

[44]I don't think it is coincidental that the strongest and most direct connection (that of Arnold) of Hus with violence occurred in the heady days surrounding the 1848 revolution. Hus is, necessarily, at least indirectly linked with violence by nearly every interpretation through his (albeit generally accentuated) causal connection to the Hussites.

[45]With the noted exception of Tomek. Tomek describes a less peaceful, not quite so gentle Hus, who challenges his opponents in Bohemia to debates wherein the loser (whomever that was judged to be) would be put to death by being burned at the stake. Here we get a taste of a *different*, medieval mentality. In the rush to see/create verisimilitude between the past and present, Tomek perceived more of the difference than most.

parallels between the Roman Catholic Church in the 15th and the Habsburg monarchy of the 19th century in this regard are obvious.

In this sense Hus was also made to stand for freedom of conscience and the rather nebulous concept of freedom in general. Freedom — of assembly, speech, movement, etc. — was a buzzword that deeply resonated in Bohemia after the repression endured under the Bach regime of the 1850s. But it meant more than this: it connotated the freedom of the Czech nation to develop, make decisions for itself and simply *be*, independent (to a degree dependent upon the individual concerned) of the Imperial yoke. Through Hus, this was a natural yearning retroactively injected into the very heart of the nation. Hus had sacrificed[46] his life for this freedom, as well as for his nation.

Moreover, Hus' sacrifice had been for the good of the world (i.e. Europe). He had inculcated these ideas and traits not only into the Czech nation but into the History of the World. Hus' brand of humanism seeped into European culture and later manifested itself in the Protestant reformation and the Enlightenment (and, according to Arnold, even the French Revolution). It was this humanism and its subsequent influence that placed Hus, and thus *his* people, on the world stage as cultured and historical. This had been their nation's contribution to World History, and it not only influenced how Czechs thought of themselves but (many Czechs earnestly believed, at any rate) how others should/did perceive them. This vital, World-Historical contribution — achieved through Hus —

---

[46]And if Hus had sacrificed his very life, then surely Czechs could contribute some mere time and money on behalf of their nation? Hus' example was one in which, I believe, Czech cultural leaders found inspiration for their own sacrifices as well as those that they asked of others.

vindicated and justified the Czech nation before the eyes of the world in the present. The Czech nation deserved its place as an actor on the European stage.

Havliček wrote that Hus "out of his love for the Czech nation... he paid for truth with the greatest human price — his own life."[47] Hus was a martyr — a martyr for the nation, reason, humanity and a martyr for truth. This fostered a distinct air of sanctity surrounding the man-become-symbol. What Hus had stood for was right and true; consequently, Hus was right and true and so was his nation. On a different level, even the (Czech) historical interpretation of Hus benefitted from the aura of holiness surrounding the figure. The nationalist interpretation was "unbiased," and the truth therein might "enrich the soul"[48] of the reader. The absolute sanctity and veracity of this generated confidence. One of Hus' most famous sayings[49] is "The truth will prevail." The Czech nation — truth infused in its soul —, would prevail as well.

You say it's your birthday

September of 1869 witnessed events that certainly rivaled, and perhaps even surpassed,

---

[47]"...lásku svou k národu českému a k pravdě největší lidskou cenou — svým životem zaplatil." Havliček, pg. 19.

[48]Interestingly, Zap's work was supposed to have been written in a spirit both unbiased *and* patriotic ("...nestranným a vlastenským..."). There was no conflict perceived between these two adjectives. The full second quote is: "...tak že čtenář každého stavu a každého věku tyto osudné, tklivé a krvavé děje zevrubně poznati a jimi duch svého obohatiti může." Both quotes are taken from the cover page of Zap (unpaginated).

[49]It is on the Presidential Seal of the Czech Republic today, in fact.

the laying of the National Theater's foundation stones in terms of their magnitude and importance. A pilgrimage to Husinec (Hus' birthplace) was held in honor of what was then thought to be the 500th anniversary of Hus' birth. Tens of thousands[50] participated in this centrepiece of what was really a country-wide, nationalistic orgasm. In Prague, the ceremony and celebration held the spotlight for three days. On the first day (September 4th), a plaque was unveiled on *Betlemské náměstí* accompanied, of course, by speeches and patriotic songs. Houses in Prague were decked out in national colors and sported Hussite banners and statues of Hus.[51]

Early the following day, a massive procession clearly numbering in the thousands gathered in and, as they would have filled the square to overflowing, around *Václavské náměstí*. The scene must have been very impressive, even more so to the discerning eye. This was a truly broad cross-section of contemporary Czech society: workers organizations, university professors and students, women, burghers' societies, artistic associations, gymnastic societies (Sokols), trade guilds, as well as other organizations were present. The parade ambled its way slowly through the crowds that had gathered to participate and take in the spectacle; the crowds shouted out "Na Zdar!" and "Sláva Husovi!" as the procession moved past them and towards *Smíchovské nádraží* whence the majority of the parade embarked by train to Husinec.

The day after that, as many as ten to twelve thousand attended a wreath-laying

---

[50]I have seen estimates as low as 10-20 000 and as high as 40-60 000.

[51]Specific houses worthy of mention (and sometimes even their owners) were noted by *Národní Listy*.

ceremony held at a statue of Hus. The recently restored statue had been redone into the image of Jan Nepomucký at some time during the 17th century. For a select few of higher social caliber, a banquet was held at Žofinský island. Attended by Czech luminaries such as Palacký, Rieger, Tyrš, Sladovský, and Sabina, as well as foreigners from America, Bulgaria, Russia, France, Vienna, England, and Serbia, the evening's main feature (aside from a multi-course menu that looks as lethal as it does delicious) was a gushing round of toasts to the Czech nation, to its past and its heroes, as well as to the rights of nations and their duty to struggle together under the banner of humanism against despotism.

The day before, pilgrims had arrived in Husinec by train, horse and foot from places other than Prague. Again, wherever these trains stopped, they were greeted with proper, nationalistic fervor.[52] Towns decorated their buildings, and their inhabitants, often dressed in national costume, came to see the decorated trains pass through as those assembled waved banners with nationalist slogans and/or words of encouragement and welcome. Local choral societies sang songs as the trains arrived and departed. The thousands descended on the tiny village of Husinec to witness the unveiling of a plaque on (what was at least believed to be) Hus' birth house and listen to speeches from various luminaries, both Czech and foreign.

Nor did the extent of the celebrations end here. The event was also marked with burnt pyres, songs and speeches in various places throughout Bohemia. From across the

---

[52]Indeed, the only place that failed to do so, Králův Týn, was rather severely upbraided by the columnist in the *Národní Listy*. *NL*, 8.9.1869.

country[53] and beyond, telegrams flooded into the pages of *Národní Listy*. As far as the Czech press was concerned, the world practically stopped turning for this celebration, but it did receive notice from the foreign (British, French and Prussian, at least) press as well.

The entire affair reveals a lot, not least of which is the importance that had been invested in Hus and the degree to which this had become accepted by a huge portion of the Czech populace. Again, though, these are merely the contours filled with the more intricate content of meaning. The words on the banners and plaques, and of the speeches, toasts, telegrams and articles illustrate quite nicely *what* Hus had come to symbolize, and in the following I would like to let them continue to do that with as minimal an amount of interference from myself as I can muster.

Pages from Great Grandma Studentka's Scrapbook — September, 1869

"[A]nd who, today, still wants to argue over dogma?— we value Hus' meaning chiefly from a national perspective."[54]

"God gave the Czechs Bohemia as he gave Canaan to the Israelites, and this is why they

---

[53]A solid turnout from all regions of Bohemia and quite a few from Moravia (though most of these came from Brno).

[54]"...kdož by nyní ještě chtěl se hádati o dogmata? — my oceňujeme význam Husův hlavně v ohledě národním." Feuilleton, Husův den, NL, 5.9.

should rule in it without the interference of foreigners!"[55]

"[Hus] taught the Czech nation to write, speak and think Czech."[56]

"And since Hus emerged from his own people, i.e. he taught and educated people in the national language... this is why the Czech people understood him, and accepted his healthy teachings as their own spiritual possession. For only that which is apprehended in the mother tongue can a nation call its own with surety. For this reason ... Czechs adhered solely to the teachings of Hus."[57]

"He taught us to live for truth and filled our hearts with a love of freedom which we want to protect according to the model of our immortal grandmaster."[58]

"Let the martyr of Constance be an example to our youth in the fight for national rights

---

[55]"... 'Bůh dal Čechům českou zemi, jako Israeli Kanan, proto mají oni v ní panovati bez rušení skrze cizozemce!'" Fleischer quoting one of Hus' comments regarding the Kutna Hora decree, NL, 5.9.

[56]"...naučil národ český český psáti, mluviti a mysleti." Sabina, NL 5.9.

[57]"A poněvadž Hus řečí svého lidu, t.j. řečí národní lid učil a vzdělával... [in the footsteps of Cyril and Methodus] ...proto mu lid český porozuměl a zdravé učení jeho přijal za své duchovní vlastnictví. Neb národ může zajisté jen to svým vlastnictvím nazvati, co pojímá v jazyku svém mateřském. (Vyb.) Proto ... Češi výhradně přilnuli k nauce Husově..."speech by B Fleischer, NL 5.9.

[58]"On naučil nás žíti pro pravdu, on do našich srdcí vlil lásku pro svobodu, kterouž po vzoru našeho nesmrtelného velmistra hájiti chceme..." speech by B. Fleischer, NL 5.9.

and freedom of conscience."[59]

"Master! Be as our model in our fight for right and truth!"[60]

"[Glory to]... the immortal Master Jan Hus ... Let us defend our holy right according to his example!"[61]

"He gave us an example, so that even we should risk our necks and dedicate our lives to that which we recognize as good! (Excellent!)"[62]

"The perseverance of Jan Hus shall always be a great example to us; [our] manly perseverance will be victorious because of such a firm foundation."[63]

---

[59] "Mučenník kostnický budiž mládeži příkladem v boji za právo národní a svobodu svědomí." Telegram NL 5.9.

[60] "Mistře! budiž nám vzorem v našem boji za právo a pravdu!" Telegram NL 5.9.

[61] "[Slava to]... nesmrtelného mistra Jana Husi... Podle příkladu jeho hajme naše svatá práva!" Telegram NL 5.9.

[62] "On podal nám příklad, abychom i my hrdla a životy věnovali za to co za dobré uznáváme! (Výborně!) Proto nám jest Hus velikým, že tomu nás učí!" Sabina, NL 5.9.

[63] "Vytrvalost Jana Husa bud' nám vždy skvělým příkladem; vytrvání mužné bude vítězení pevným základem." Telegram from Beseda mladoboleslavská, NL, 5.9.

"We hold onto ... his motto ... 'Freedom!' In this sense we are all Hussites."[64]

"[It was a celebration] from the entire nation. ... and Hus' name rang through the whole homeland with respect and adoration."[65]

"As Moslems to Mecca, so Czechs from all corners of the world made their pilgrimage to the birthplace of Master Jan Hus."[66]

"[T]he most faithful Czech unknown to faithful Czechs, today Hus crosses over from his exile into the precious circle of our own, into our arms, into our hearts."[67]

"Master Jan, to You they chant a thousand celebratory hymns, and the sound of this singing echoes in the hearts of millions of faithful Czechs."[68]

---

[64]"My držíme se ... jeho hesla... 'Svoboda!' V tom smyslu jsme my všichni husity."Feuilleton, Husův den, NL, 5.9

[65]"...od celého národa. ... po celé pak vlasti ozývalo se jmeno Husovo s úctou a velebením." On or off the island? *Svoboda*, 10.9.1869, pg. 505.

[66]"Jako mahomedán do Mekky, putovali Čechové se všech končin světa ... k rodišti mistra Jana Husi." NL, 8.9.

[67]"...od věrných Čechův neznaný nejvěrnější Čech, vstupuje dnes z vyhnanství do drahé vlasti své, do náručí našeho, k srdcím našim." NL 5.9

[68]"Mistře Jene, Tobě pějou tisícové hymnus slavný; zvuky zpěvu toho najdou ozvěnu [echo] v milionech srdcí Čechu věrných." Telegram, NL, 6.9.

"The memory of Hus is commemorated in every Czech heart! Hus' soul dwells eternal in the nation."[69]

"Glory to You, celebrated master of ours! Czech sons celebrate as faithful followers of the principles and teachings of the first Czech patriot and fighter for liberation, for freedom and enlightenment."[70]

"Therefore, whoever is a faithful Czech and aware of the merits of the great master... stand forth and bear witness that the Czech nation has adored this undauntable fighter for its rights and that we shall never forget the man who elevated us to a higher, world idea."[71]

"The nation that forgets its own great spirits and warriors, of its own accord casts itself into the dark ignorance of all other nations."[72]

---

[69]"Památku Husovu oslavujž každé srdce české! Duch Husův dliž [dwells] věčně v národu." Telegram from Sokol novopacký, NL, 6.9.

[70]"Sláva Ti, oslavovaný mistře náš! Synové češti se proslavují co věrni stoupenci zásad a učení předního českého vlatence a bojovníka za vymanění, za svobodu a osvětu." Telegram from Omladina novoměstská, NL, 8.9.

[71]"Kož tedy věrným jsi Čechem a povědom zásluh velikého mistra... dostaviž se na svědectví, že národ český posud velebí neohroženého bojovníka za práva svá a nikdy nezapomene na muže, jenž povznesl jej na výši idei světových." *Svoboda*, 10.7.1869, pg. 386.

[72]"Národ, jenž zapomíná svých veleduchů a bohatýrů, sám v temné vrhá se zapomenutí u národů ostatních." *Svoboda*, 10.9.1869, pg. 511.

"Take a good look around, Czechs, and note how the name of Master Jan Hus is honored and valued by every enlightened nation, the leading sons of which have arrived from lands far removed to celebrate the memory of a great awakener of the human soul with you."[73]

"They burned the corporeal shell, but his spirit rose as a Phoenix from the ashes and fired the nation to a fight which elevated it unto the greatest glory in human history!"[74]

"[T]he Czech nation was first celebrated throughout the world because of Jan Hus. Hus' teachings... and the way in which they were defended till this very day awakens the admiration and respect of the entire educated world."[75]

"And these pupils [other nations] of the Czech nation must acknowledge — if they don't want to lie — that here, in Bohemia, in Prague, ... the first thought of freedom was tested."[76]

---

[73]"Rozhlednětež se Čechové a pozorujte, kterak jmeno Mistra Jana Husi ctěno a váženo jest u všech národův osvícených, a kterak přední synové jejich z dalekých dostavili se krajin, aby společně s vámi oslavili dnes památku velkého buditele ducha lidského..." *Svoboda*, 10.9.1869, pg. 510.

[74]"Spálili schránku tělesnou, však duch co fénix vzletl z popele a rozohnil národ k boji, jenž povznesl jej k nejvyšší slávě v dějinách lidstva!" Telegram from Omladina z Lomnice, NL, 6.9.

[75] "národ český poprvé Janem Husem proslavil se po veškerém světě. Učení Husovo ... a spůsob, jímž hájeno bylo, až posud vzbuzuje obdiv a úctu všeho vzdělaného světa." NL 5.9.

[76]"A tito žákové národa českého musí, nechtějí-li lháti, uznati, že zde, v Čechách, zde v Praze ... vytknuta byla první myšlenka svobody. (Sláva!)" Sabina, NL 5.9.

"For our Hus was not simply a great man for the Czech nation, but a great man for the entire European world, the instiller, the defender of every nation's beliefs — freedom and enlightenment — which have become our motto in the present."[77]

"Jan Hus brought us onto the world stage; his undauntable spirit will be with us for ever to strengthen us in every struggle for right and truth."[78]

"[T]he histories of nations are the one, true measure of their moral worth and physical strength. And surely you will come to believe, most esteemed guests, that through our continual actions to secure enlightenment, our nation aims for those same, lofty goals for which rather the whole educated world strives, and towards which that same, great man whose memory we celebrate today marked the path, that is to the unshackling of the soul from the yoke placed upon humanity in the dark middle ages."[79]

---

[77]"Neboť náš Hus nebyl toliko velikým mužem pro národ český snad jen, alebrž i velkým mužem pro evropský celý svět, velikánem to, zastancem víry všech národů, svobody a osvěty, kteráž stala se heslem našich dnův." Sabina, NL 5.9.

[78]"Jan Hus uvedl nás na dějiště světové; neohrožený duch jeho budiž s námi na věky a siliž nás ve všech zápasech našich za právo a pravdu!" NL 5.9.

[79]"...dějiny národů jsou jedině pravým měřítkem pro jich mravní cenu a fysickou sílu. Zajisté uvěříte, veleváženi hosté, našemu vždy skutky osvědčenému ujištění, že národ náš směřuje k témuž vznešenému cíli, jehož dosici celý vzdělaný svět se vynasnažuje, a k němuž nám onen velký muž, jehož památku dnes slavíme, cestu naznačil, totiž k všeobecné osvětě, k uvolněni duch ode jha uvrženého naň zatemnělým středověkem." Welcoming speech of Dr. Wieser (chairman of the Husinec celebratory committee) when the procession reached the bridge to Husinec. NL, 8.9.

"[L]et us show... that we are not only persuaded by our noble Master, but invigorated, and that we shall keep wanting to fight without fear for our holy rights under the banner of world progress."[80]

"The flames of Constance light our path to truth, right, freedom and a better life amongst nations."[81]

"[I]t is a holiday fused into our entire being, as long as we, ourselves, shall be a nation! To celebrate the memory of our great countryman and patriot, our first teacher of and leader towards truth and freedom... [to show] our noble, national pride, our national self confidence before the eyes of learned Europe."[82]

"This is why we revere Hus, for he inculcated these thoughts into our hearts."[83]

---

[80]"... dokažme ... že vznešeným mistrem svým nejsme jenom přesvědčeni ale i povzbuzeni, že stále a neohroženě bojovati chceme za svatá naše práva pod praporem světového pokroku." Dr. Wieser, NL, 8.9.

[81]"Plameny kostnické osvětlujtež cesty naše k pravdě, právu, svobodě a lepšímu životu mezi národy." Telegram, NL, 6.9.

[82] "...jest to svátek, který jest sloučen s celou tvojí bytostí, dokud ty sám, národe, jsi a budeš! Oslavuje památku svého velikého krajana a vlastence, svého prvního učitele a vůdce ku pravdě a svobodě... před tváří vzdělané Evropy svou šlechetnou hrdost národní, své národní sebevědomí..."B. Fleischer, NL, 5.9.

[83]"Proto velebíme Husa, že tyto myšlenky vštipil v srdce naše..." Karel Sabina's speech in NL 5.9.

"The memory of Master Jan Hus lives eternally in our hearts and teaches us to die for our fatherland and its holy right."[84]

"[F]or the heroic blood of the Hussites flows through our veins and again grants us our lost glory. Of course Hus' body was burned — but his spirit hovers sublimely over us, his abundantly blessed descendants. He shall help us to attain victory — for the redemption of Slavdom is not far."[85]

"Glory to our immortal resurrecter, Master Jan Hus. Let his great spirit always govern us and his blood ever flow through our veins."[86]

"Until the end of time, Hus and the Czech nation are inseparable."[87]

---

[84]"Památka Mistra Jana Husi v srdcích našich věčně žije a učí nás pro vlast a svatá práva její umírati." Telegram, NL, 6.9.

[85]"...neboť hrdinská krev Husitův proudí dosud v žilách našich a porpůjčí nám opět slávu ztracenou. Tělo Husovo jest sice upáleno — duch jeho ale se vznáší velebně nad námi, žehnaje hodným potomkům. On dopomůže nám k vítězství — neboť spása Slovanstva není daleka." Telegram from Brno, NL, 5.9.

[86] "Sláva nesmrtelnému křisiteli našemu, mistru Janu Husovi. Nechť ovládá nás povždy duch tohoto velikána a krev jeho ať proudí v žilách našich." Telegram, NL, 6.9.

[87]"Hus a národ český jsou na věky věkův od sebe nerozluččitelni" NL 5.9.

"[A]nd his spirit lives undying in an undying nation."[88]

"The flames wasted Your body, but Your soul lives in us."[89]

"*In Hus the embodied spirit of the Czech nation is revealed to us*, and the flame of the Constance pyre has become a flame of inheritance whose fervor shall never perish — we ready ourselves for new vengeance."[90]

Ground Control to Master Jan

Where did *this* come from? Throughout this whole period I think of the growth of Czech nationalism as a sort of slowly expanding fermentation. Even in the late 18th century, Hus' meaning was undergoing a nationalistic shift — a shift that profoundly intensified in the late 1840s. In the 1850s, due to the censure of the Bach regime, we are presented with the seeming seizure and perhaps even reversal of this, but this is misleading. In fact, by the 1850s, nationalist reinterpretations of Hus were simply 'out

---

[88]"... a jeho duch žije neumořen v neumořeném národu." Feuilleton, "Husův den" NL 5.9.

[89]"Plamen ztrávil tělo Tvé, duch Tvůj v nás však žije." Telegram, NL, 8.9.

[90]"V Husovi se nám objevil vtělený duch českého národa, plamen hranice kostnické stal se plamenem dědičným, jehožto zápal nezhyne nikdy a nikde. Pro vzkříšeného ducha chystají hranici - hotujeme k nové pomstě." Telegram, NL, 6.9. (Emphasis mine)

there' (Palacký, Havliček, and Tyl being the most notable), and these were being circulated, read, re-read and discussed.

It is on this invisible foundation[91] that the more colorful nationalist superstructure of the 1860s was built with such drama and seeming swiftness. The 1860s — through the liberalization of the press and publication, the growth of various organizations (such as the Sokol movement, Artists' societies, Choral groups, etc.), ever expanding urbanization, and various political events such as the 1867 creation of Austro-Hungarian dualism — provided both the means and the impetus to exponentially speed up this fermentation to the point where it often exploded. The hubbub surrounding the National Theater and the "Tabor" movement perhaps comes most readily to peoples' minds, but the pilgrimage and celebration of 1869 certainly belongs in this category as well.

This explosion marked the definitive lift-off of a symbol. Hus had entered the stratosphere of the floating signifier and had left his pastness, his otherness, almost totally behind. Hus was claimed boldly, nakedly for present and future purposes, and connected only by the most slender tendrils of 'fact' (names, dates and the outline of his story) to whatever it was that he and his time may have been. The man, as a symbol, was infused with a new, and incredibly rich, meaning.

Or should I say meanings? I have merely touched upon the significance invested in Hus:

---

[91]Perhaps not invisible. It would be interesting, and perhaps very enlightening as well, to look through the minutes, records, etc. of the various nationally oriented organizations beginning to emerge as parts of public life in this period as well as, perhaps, the diaries, letters and other personal effects left behind by their members (if any of these things still exist; I would imagine and hope that some, at least, still do) in an attempt to gain a more detailed understanding of how this 'cultural fermentation' happened. I regret that I was unable to do this.

elements of pan-slavism, humanism, and the idea of a national-historic mission were strongly present in Hus-as-symbol as well. These were all important pieces of Hus that shall receive more attention in the following chapters. In this chapter I have endeavored to focus on the central mechanism of Hus' symbolic meaning — his location in the soul of the nation — that enabled any further of his/its meanings to affect the Czech culture's continual reproduction of itself through time.

Chapter II

Mr. Pickle[1]

The burgher Pan Vokurka, it seems, had fallen under the influence of Chrt — a local journalist "working for the cause of Prussian Protestantism" — and had decided to take part in this year's celebrations of Hus in Tvarkova. Yet, somehow, Mr. Vokurka wasn't quite at ease with his decision and so he went to visit his local Catholic dean. The dean listened carefully and patiently to Mr. Vokurka, offering a few reasonable sounding opinions of his own and giving the troubled burgher a few Catholic pamphlets about Hus to take home with him and read at his leisure. In the end, not only did Mr. Vokurka see the error of his ways, ask forgiveness from his dean for having been so "blind", but he began to distribute Roman Catholic literature and became politically active in city council so that, "In Tvarkova the Catholics themselves decided not to suffer under the whining of a mercenary journalist ever again."[2]

---

[1]In contemporary, colloquial Czech the consonant "v" is sometimes added before words beginning with an "o". Thus "on" (he) can become "von", "okno" (window), "vokno" and so on. The word for pickle in Czech is "okurka" and thus whenever I reread my notes on Skalický's pamphlet, keeping in mind the state the Roman Catholic church of Bohemia was in regarding Hus, I find that I cannot help thinking to myself, with a chuckle, "Mr. Pickle".

[2]From F. R. Skalický, *Oslava Husova*, 2nd ed., Biskupská Knihtiskárna, Hradec Králové, 1900. The quotes are as follows: "ve prospěch pruského protestantismu.", "slepý", "V Tvarkově opět rozhodovali o sobě katolici nestrádali již pod knutou námezdného novináře." pp. 36, 35, 36.

This story is the framing device for a much used[3] pamphlet on Hus written by one F. R. Skalický and published by the Prague Archbishopric in 1900. Sandwiched between the adventures of Mr. Vokurka is the body of the pamphlet. In this Skalický began by regretting the extremism regarding Hus on both the Protestant-Nationalist and Roman Catholic sides of the issue. While Skalický hardly gives off the impression of objectivity that he claimed to be striving for,[4] it is true that his criticism of both sides reveals a lot, especially when stroked 'against the grain'.[5]

Complain though the Roman Catholics might about perceived excesses in the honoring of Hus as a nationalist (most notably the anti-Clericalism they claimed — and many Protestants agreed, regretting this as well — was frequently woven into the celebration of Hus), they had conceded this ground. "The patriotic meaning of Hus cannot be doubted in the least," Skalický wrote, "and no Catholic would object to anything in the celebration of Hus 'the patriot'." Indeed, the Catholics were even capable of supporting Hus. Skalický asserted that the Catholics had been in favor of the erection of a plaque to Hus on the National Museum in Prague as "absolutely correct" as viewed from the respectable

---

[3]This pamphlet had (by far) the largest production run of the pamphlets that the Bishopric printed in that time frame. See Ibid. (back cover)

[4]See pp. 10-12 especially. Skalický could only compromise himself *so* far with the Protestant-Nationalist interpretation of Hus. He steadfastly maintained that Hus had undoubtedly erred against the holy Roman Catholic church and this, despite significant concessions to the opposing party (see below), clearly colored the entire pamphlet.

[5]Aaron I. Gurevich, *Medieval popular culture: problems of belief and perception*, transl. János M. Bak and Paul Hollingsworth, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988 (see, especially, the introduction pp. xv - xix). Not that Skalický needs much stroking: a light touch suffices nicely.

vantage points of science (philology) and nationalism.[6]

Instead Skalický seemed almost to have given up on stemming this tide of Hus and endeavored, rather, to divert it. In one place in the text he questioned why Hus should be celebrated *more* than any other national figure.[7] In another section he argued in favor of the celebration of Hus, for example, on the anniversary of the proclamation of the Kutna Hora decree as a date much more agreeable to Hus' patriotic meaning and less offensive to Catholics. Skalický's desire, on the one hand, to tone down the celebration of Hus is out of tune with his later wish to simply change the focus of the celebrations and the partial contradiction of these two tactics suggest a certain desperation on the part of Skalický.

Much is also revealed in Skalický's railing against the "modern patriots".

> Recently, since the entrance of the realist party (equaling a few of the university's ambitious professors)... everyone must call thoughtlessly and according to the given journalistic recipe: "Hus is the greatest son of the Czech nation, Hus is a man of the greatest importance to the world,... Nothing came before Hus and nothing after."[8]

---

[6]The full quote reads, "... proto jsme toho náhledu, že Husovi v ohledu vědeckém a národním náleží vším právem tabulka na českém museu v Praze. ... Vlastenecký význam Husův nemůže býti ani bran v pochybnost a žádný katolik by proti oslavě 'vlasteneckého' Husa nic nenamítal..." Skalický, pg. 28. It is noteworthy that Hus' plaque was still quite a sore point with the Catholics eleven years after the controversy over the 'bandits and arsonists' erupted in the Czech diet. This seems very much like some sort of continuing damage control. Please see the Introduction, pg. 7 for more on this controversy.

[7]Nicely betraying to us that, in Skalický's mind, Hus *was* celebrated more than any other Czech national figure.

[8]"V poslední době od vystoupení strany realistů (= několik ctižádostivých universitních professorů)... musí každý bezmyšlenkovitě volati s davem podle

The author's choice of the word "everyone" is perhaps careless, but nonetheless revealing. He is basically admitting that a great number of Czechs (and a majority is suggested by the diction) *did* adhere to the by now rather stock opinion, thoughtless or no, of Hus as a figure of tremendous national and global moment.

Later Skalický continued in the same vein.

> Let us take note that in our political struggle Hus' name and his statues often serve as a substitute or a surrogate for political achievement. ... It is precisely this that disgusts every thinking person — that certain parties make [political] trade out of the Hus cult, and a very lucrative trade at that. The Catholic church and religion, which suffer greatly at the hands of these purely political agitators, pay the losses for this trade.[9]

It is quite clear from both of the preceding quotes that Hus was a symbol with substantial cultural and political currency in Czech culture at the turn of the century, and that the Catholic hierarchy was very worried about it.

But it is also evident that this currency extended beyond purely Protestant circles. Skalický repeatedly stressed the point that Hus had diverged from the teachings of the Roman Catholic church, that any Catholic could and that every Catholic should read the

---

novinářského receptu: 'Největším synem českého národa jest Hus, nejsvětším člověkem jest Hus, nejslavnější doba českých dějin jsou husitské války. Nic nebylo před Husem, nic po Husovi'." Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[9]"Na to dovolujeme si upozorniti, že Husovo jméno a jeho sochy slouží často v politickém našem boji za nahrážku čili surogát politických 'vymoženosti'. ... To právě se hnusí každému myslícímu člověku, že s kultem Husovým vedou jisté strany obchod a to výnosny obchod. Útratu za tyto obchodníky platí katolická církev a náboženství, které těmito štvanicemi čistě politickými velice trpí." Ibid., pp. 17-18.

writings of Hus himself in order to confirm that this was the case. For Hus had undoubtedly erred and "this is why we cannot celebrate all of Hus, including his errors, and especially not the 6th of July, if we want to remain truly faithful Catholic Christians."[10] Skalický concluded the body of the pamphlet by protesting, "[Hus'] *incorrect* teaching cannot direct the Czech nation, 98 percent of which belongs to the Catholic faith."[11]

These are hardly the words of a confident man.

The pamphlet in its entirety, from its large production run to the accompanying story of Mr. Vokurka so richly shaded in the fantasy of a fairy-tale hue, to its tone, right down to the deemed necessity of its publication, period, all ring with the concern of the Roman Catholic church in Bohemia. At the center of it all is this: Skalický's admonition that Hus simply cannot be the symbol that guides a Catholic nation is exposed for what it is by his irritated accusation that 'everyone' believes Hus to be a great national figure of world importance. One gets the feeling that the reason behind the pamphlet was that the first portion of Mr. Vokurka's story was all too real, while his subsequent 'recovery' was more the work of fiction. Czech Catholics, in very large numbers, were buying into the national symbolism of Hus.

This is illustrated nicely as well by the goings on at two (at least) celebrations of Cyril and Methodius. On July 6th 1897 at a Cyril and Methodius tábor in Uh. Hradiště two speakers in a row connected Hus (one even included the Hussites) with the two saints. All

---

[10]"...proto nemůžeme celého Husa i s jeho bludy oslavovati a zvláště ne den 6. července, chceme-li zůstati pravověrnými katolickými křesťany." Ibid., pg. 26.

[11]"*Nesprávným* učením jeho nemůže se říditi český národ, jenž 98% hlásí se k pravé víře katolické." Ibid., pg. 33.

three stood for 'slavdom' and against the Germanisation and Latinization of the Slavs. The more radical of the two speakers even "wished that their [Hus' and the Hussites'] spirit guide the steps and dealings of our nation."[12] This sort of thing was even reported in the Catholic newspapers. In 1903 the newspaper *Katolické Listy* reported that a Dr. V. Šílený grouped Cryill, Methodius and Hus all together "as the three Slav apostles." The paper then described how Šílený continued with the hope that there would come a time when

> even the circle which today stands aside will hold Hus up as their national light... Šílený further connected the idea of Cyril-Methodius with the idea of Hus and deduced that there was no difference (!) between the two apostles and Hus, and that it was necessary (!) to revere Hus in the same manner as both Moravian spiritual leaders (!?).[13]

Shortly after this the tábor was reported as becoming "rowdy" and it was broken up by the

---

[12]"...přal si, aby duch jejich řídil kroky a jednání našeho národa." *NL* 7.7.1897. The speaker was a Mr. Vráta. All information on this particular celebration is taken from this source.

[13]The full quote reads as follows: "...Na Moravě sv. Cyrili a Methoděj bojovali prot Germanstvu, v Čechách Jan Hus tak činil. My jsme následovníky Cryilla a Methoděje, Husa a spojujeme dohromady jich památku jako tří apoštolů slovanských. Nadejde doba, že i kruhy, které dnes stoji stranou, budou míti Husa za národního světce, kterýmžto názorem všeobecně pak platným dovršena bude vnitřní shoda národa českého a ostatním světem slovanským. ... Řečník [Šílený] v dalším spojuje ideu Cyrilo-Metodejskou s ideou Husovou a dovozuje, že není rozdílu (!) mezi oběma apoštoly a Husem a že Husa nutno (!) ctít zrovna tak jako oba moravské věrozvěsty (!?)." *Katolické Listy* 7.7.1903. The editorial comments (in parentheses) relay succinctly just what the editors of the paper thought of Dr. Šílený's comments. This report contrasts nicely with a curious claim made in another article on the very same day that the Cyril-Methodius celebrations in Moravia were 'Hus free'. This, too, is highly informative when read against the grain. Why should the claim be made unless it was a common problem?

police.[14] The cult of Hus had become so widespread that it had even begun to infect the main event that Catholics had organized as a counter to it.

What I described as the losing battle on the part of the Catholics in the first chapter of this thesis had by now turned into an all out retreat. Even here, when Catholic writers gave ground on nationalist aspects of Hus they, in effect, created ammunition which Protestant nationalists could and did use against them.[15] But my favorite Catholic quote of the period is the following. In 1903 *Katolické Listy* lamented that "[i]f there would not have been democratic and national socialists, nor young liberals or Sokols, no one would even speak about Jan Hus."[16] This is akin to complaining that if there weren't so many people the world wouldn't be so crowded. The Young Czechs, Sokols, etc. were simply powerful, unavoidable facts of life in late 19th and early 20th century Bohemia. Nor were

---

[14]Ibid. A few questions pop into my mind regarding this particular source/article. First, I wonder if the whole thing is a fabrication. "Šílený", after all, means "mad" or "crazy" in Czech, and the initial "V." for his first name might well stand for "Velmi" which means "greatly" or "very". "Doctor Very Crazy" would be a wonderful title for a straw man, and yet I doubt that this was the case. This seems a bit much — why should the Catholics play with this extremely dangerous fire? Secondly I cannot help but wonder if there did not exist an at least tacit agreement between the Czech Roman Catholic hierarchy and the Austro-Hungarian constabulary regarding these events. Cyril and Methodius celebrations with thousands of participants seemed to be acceptable so long as Hus and the Hussites were not mentioned.

[15]Thus, for example *Čech* (*Katolické Listy*, but after a name change) complained about the newspaper, *Věstníku* using some of Antonín Lenz's (and even Helfert's!) quotes out of context to make Hus seem like a hero. The writer was indignant, but this is the point. Catholics writers, on the defensive, could be used by their opponents in this way (and not the other way around). This sort of thing was actually quite common. *Čech* 4.7.1915.

[16]"Kdyby nebylo demokratických a národních socialistů, pak mlado-liberálů a sokolských jednot, nikdo by o Janu Husovi ani nemluvili." *Katolické Listy*, 6.7.1903.

they about to disappear. Nor, for that matter, was the symbol of Hus in which these organizations believed, which they supported, used and thus fostered. The Catholics had lost the battle for the symbolism of Hus: it was, largely, out of their hands. Some recalcitrants[17] had yet to realize it.

Erection

A retreat on one side usually means an advance on the other, and the issue of Hus was no exception to this. One way to measure this advance might be a statue-o-meter. Shortly after the "lupičů a žharců" controversy the first statue was erected. There followed a brief interlude, but by 1915 *nineteen* statues of Hus graced various Czech cities and towns.[18] There was a similar literary explosion on the topic of Hus. By July 1915 ads for books on

---

[17]The best example of one of these is Antonín Lenz, easily one of the most prolific writers on the topic of Hus. The first publication by Lenz which dealt with Hus that I have been able to find dated from 1869. His most famous piece is probably the 1875 *Učení Jana Husi* (this is the work explicitly recommended by Skalický, pg. 19.), but during the 1890's and early 1900's Lenz tackled the growing cult of Hus as if it were his own personal mission, publishing repeatedly on the subject (please see the bibliography for a partial list). But Lenz wrote as if from another age, and his contemporaries noted this. In reviewing Czech literature on Hus in *Národní Listy*'s literary supplement in 1901, Václav Flajšhans even occasionally viewed the "old fiction[s]" ("starou fikci") that Lenz portrayed as worthy of little better than laughter. Nor could his review of the wider body of Catholic literature on Hus (within which Flajšhans singled out Lenz as the main author) as "sometimes in opposition to the truth, always in opposition to objectivity" ("často na úkor pravdě, vždycky na úkor objektivnosti") be characterized as favorable. *NL* (příl.) 6.7.1901.

[18]The complete list of extant statues is listed in *NL*, 3.7.1915. It should be noted, too, that this number does not count Šaloun's statue of Hus in Prague (which was yet to be unveiled). Pictures of seven of these statues can be seen in *Zlatá Praha*, r. XXXII, č. 39.

Hus were taking up the majority of entire pages of newpapers (Catholic papers included). Issues of periodicals published in July were devoted to, or centered upon, Hus. A Hus museum even came into existence in Prague.

The main event, of course, was the statue of Hus erected, eventually,[19] in *Staroměstské náměstí*. This provided one and a half major national events of a scale similar to the 1869 pilgrimage to Husinec. I say one and a half because the intended unveiling in 1915 — by all indications intended to be another momentous nationalistic orgy — was spoiled by World War I (a fact much lamented by Czechs at the time). The laying of the monument's foundation stone in 1903 was, again, attended by thousands. Representatives of various areas (including a delegation of Czechs from America) and social strata of the Czech

---

[19]Frankly, I find it hard to conceive of Hus' statue being elsewhere. I don't mean this in the sense that Hus' statue is so well suited to the old town square that it could hardly be anywhere else. Indeed, *Betlemské náměstí* is probably more fitting from a strictly historical point of view. I mean that because it is what I *know* to be true *today*, it is hard for me to really 'wrap my head around' the reality that this need not have been the case. The Committee for the Building of the Hus memorial (Spolek pro zbudovani Husův pomník) had considered several other places, including *Betlemské náměstí*. Indeed in 1895 they had voted and decided upon *Václavské náměstí* (where the famous statue of St. Wenceslas now stands. I cannot help but wonder how might an historical subtlety such as this change have effected the flow of Czech history.) as the site for the memorial. At one point it even seemed that financial shortfalls might keep the monument from being completed.

I find that, in dealing with Hus as a symbol, I seem to fall into a 'whiggish' sort of trap. It is all too easy to see the rise and triumph of Hus as a nationalist symbol *as it happened* as somehow inevitable. In a larger sense it is, I think, a defect in most Czech histories. We tend to fall into the nationalist pattern ourselves even when what we are trying to do is examine how this nationalism came to be. It is as if it had to come to be — we spend too little time exploring variants and alternate pathways. From our end of history we still look at what was successful, what emerged 'at our end', and perhaps this is only natural. I find it useful, though, to provide myself with a check every now and then — a reminder that such and such did not have to be, or at least did not have to be as it is today. Elementary and yet, because of this, essential.

nation took part in the procession. In fact, the ceremony displayed many of what, by now, had become the standard Hus accouterments in songs, speeches, crowds, national costume, banners bedecked with chalices, chartered and decorated trains, etc. The events of 1915 were somewhat more unusual. Despite the postponement of the unveiling and the prohibition of any sort of mass public demonstration, thousands of people — men, women and children — of their own accord[20] placed roses on or around the monument such that the base was covered in them by the early afternoon.

Nor were the celebrations of Hus restricted to occasioned years such as 1903. Rather they seem to have become regular and even more widespread and intense. I have read reminiscences by grandfathers about Hus day celebrations in the home towns of their childhood that seem to depict these events as if they were something like pagan May day festivals. The events expanded beyond a single day, and newspapers began to refer to "Hus' week".[21]

And this reveals how deeply and passionately Hus was *felt* by Czechs. Hus' day was called a "festive day".[22] One was to approach Hus' memory with "piety"[23]. During this

---

[20]Well, not exactly. A fairly effective 'grapevine' was evidently in operation but at least there had been no public suggestion for Czechs to do this. The individuals and small groups approaching the monument to deposit their roses was actually quite an ingenious way of circumventing the Austrian authorities.

[21]The newspaper closely associated with Massaryk, *Čas*, blandly stated "We are in Hus' week." ("Jsme v Husovu týdni...") *Čas*, 6.7.1910. *Čech* even (somewhat sarcastically, it is true) refers to 1915 as "Husův rok" ("Hus' year"). *Čech*, 4.7.1915.

[22]"...dnem svátečním..." Krofta, 1913, pg. 3. NL 1898.

[23]*NL* 6.7.1906.

time the saying "the cult of Hus"[24] comes into Czech parlance to describe those who honored him yearly. Hus was often called a martyr and even a saint. Regularly during this period telegrams were received on or around July 6th in *Národní Listy* from those who had either sent a wreath to Hus' grave in Constance or had taken one with them personally on a pilgrimage to the site.[25] The diction (pilgrims, cult, holy, pious, etc.) and ardor are quite revealing — Hus was a saint, a saint in the church of the nation,[26] and the Czechs were a

---

[24]In 1915 a Czech might have read about "the new, growing cult of the martyr of Constance, originating with the pilgrimage to Constance in 1868... the cult which grows year after year and surely shall never disappear from our nation." ("...nový, vroucí kult Kostnického mučeníka, jak projevil se r. 1868 pouti do Kostnice ... kult, jenž vzrůstá rok co rok a jistě nevymizí z našeho národa nikdy.") J. Hanuš, "M. Jan Hus a husitství za pobělohorské protireformace", pp. 29-57 in *Mistr Jan Hus v životě a památkách českého lidu*, Českého čtenáře, Prague, 1915, pg. 57.

[25]The romance was evident in the recollections of one of these pilgrims, Božena Viková Kunětická (a feminist and a future member of the Czech parliament), who related the following as she approached Constance to lay her flowers at Hus' grave. "There in the fog! There in the unknown! It was impossible to shake the emotion, calling from the memories of all those years in which Constance was not a city for us but a great burning pyre. From our childhood days until that very morning we saw it flaming, horrible and destroying. And even then it seemed to us as if the thick, white fog was the smoke of some distant flame which we could not see." ("Tam v té mlze!— Tam v tom neznámu! Nebylo možno vyhnouti se pohnutí, vyvolanému vzpomínkou na všecka léta, v nichž Kostnice nebyla pro nás městem, ale velikou hořící hranicí. Od dětských let až po tot ráno viděli jsme ji planoucí, strašlivou a zničující. A ještě v tu chvíli zdálo se nám, že hustá bílá mlha je dymem dalekého požáru, jejž nevidíme.") Božena Viková Kunětická, *Švýcarské scenerie*, F. Šimáček, Prague, 1902, pg. 7. My gratitude to Dr. Kathleen Hayes for bringing this to my attention. There is, actually, a lot here. The palpable romance of the age and the romance with which they viewed Hus, the confession of immersion in the story of Hus since childhood, the feeling we get that Hus is somehow still present in the form of the (eternally?) burning flame which they cannot see — all of this and more is evident.

[26]A part of the 1905 Hus celebration held in St. Mikuláš (a significant location in itself) were said to have been characterized as "a holiday of a truly elevating character not only of the Christian but of the *Nationally religious*." ("...skutečně povznešený ráz svátku nejen křesťanského ale i *nábožensky národního*.") *NL* 7.7. 1905 (emphasis mine). The

fervently devout people.

Indeed, this effusive wallowing in Hus seems to have, at times, flirted with an overdose. In a front page article in *Národní Listy,* Václav Flajšhans admitted that there were those who already cried, "enough of Hus!" and "We're beyond all that." Ladislav Šaloun (the artist responsible for the statue of Hus now standing in *Staroměstské náměstí*) expressed his concerns that the planned 1915 unveiling of his monument not be accompanied by mere "empty rhetoric" and pomp.[27] In a similar but broader sense, *Zlatá Praha* had complained ten years earlier that Czechs seemed to take the opportunity to celebrate anything or anyone nationalistic that came their way, and often with little genuine feeling. "And then there are other celebrations," the same writer continued, " and everything in you sways, everywhere there is a stirring, and joy and hope gushes forth from the heart. These are the moments truly festive of the nation... Thus was the celebration of the laying of the foundation stone to the [Hus] memorial."[28] This flirtation was decidedly *not* a

---

diction here is revealing of the complexities underlying the seemingly unitary juggernaut of Czech identity as well, for it is very *Catholic*. The linguistic style of the nation's religion had been subsumed into its patriotism even though — with regards to Hus, the Hussites, the Czech Brethren, etc.— these were at odds. My thanks to Dr. Derek Sayer for pointing this out to me.

[27]The full quote reads: "Jaké jsou přípravy, které k tomuto svátku konáme, jsou-li důstojny Husovy památky? Toť otázka, kterou si musíme položiti dříve, než bude pozdě, než se naše oslavy rozvěhnou na vnější, parádní slavnosti a prázdné řeči." Ladislav Šaloun, "1915" pp. 3-4 in *Husův památník: slavnostní list k 6. Červenci 1913*, ed. Dr. Fr. Loskot, Volné myšlenky, Praha, 1913, pg. 3.

[28]"A zase jsou jiné [celebrations], a všecko se ve vás chvěje, vše je pohnuro, a radost i nadšení překypí vám ze srdce. To jsou chvíle pravého svátku národa,... Takovou slavností byla ... slavnost položení základního kamene k pomníku [Husa]..." *Zlatá Praha*, r. XX (1903), č. 37, pg. 442.

consummation. In addressing those who might wish to leave Hus behind, having had 'enough' of him, Flajšhans was more direct and aggressive. "The pyre of Constance burns lively in the heart of every one of us — and it must break the very soul of anyone who goes beyond it!"[29]

Here we are again at the Czech soul, and, again, it is key. It is Hus' locus of meaning — what he symbolized. "We can honorably live only as *the nation of Hus*."[30] "[T]he five hundredth anniversary of the Master's death was celebrated by *Hus' nation* intimately".[31] Quotes such as these two, substituting the possessive of "Hus" for the adjective "Czech", are not hard to find. I was struck, though, by an advertisement for a reproduction of a painting of Hus at the pyre in Constance which I kept seeing in the newspapers. The painting was entitled "The Czech Pyre".[32] The words Hus and Czech had become synonymous. As Flajšhans put it, "*Hus, simply, is a symbol of our Czechness* in all of its most beautiful range."[33]

---

[29]"V srdci každého z nás hoří hranice kostnická ohněm živým — a musí zlomit duši, kdo jde přes ni dál!" *NL*, 6.7.1908.

[30]"Můžeme čestně žít jen jako *národ Husův*." Dr. Ant. Uhlíř, "Husova Pravda a Národ" pp. 5-6, in *Husův památník: slavnostní list k 6. Červenci 1913*, pg. 6 (emphasis mine).

[31]"...pětisté výročí smrti Mistrovy bylo oslaveno *národem Husovym* intimně..." *NL*, 7.7.1915 (emphasis mine).

[32]See, for example, *NL* 7.7.1906.

[33]"*Hus prostě je symbol našeho češství* v nejkrásnějším jeho rozpětí." Flajšhanns in *NL* 6.7.1908 (emphasis mine).

Usul[34]

It was Tomas Garrigue Masaryk that brought a new and extremely powerful twist out of this symbol's woodwork and into the limelight, however. In 1895 he stated: "We are Hus' nation and we call ourselves this gladly", and then he added, "however are we Hus' nation in earnest and in reality? No, we are not. Not yet."[35] With a subtle shift of rhetoric and thought Masaryk had transformed Hus beyond an example or model to be held up and emulated, and into a task or even a mission to be fulfilled, achieved. What was this task?

It was reformation, renewal, progress (Masaryk used the terms interchangeably[36]). The Czechs had brought this to themselves and to the world once before in the form of the Reformation. This was exhibit 'A', if you will, in the courtroom of history demonstrating that the Czechs were a special people, ahead of their time, for "it took a century before other peoples followed in our footsteps."[37] And the Czechs had brought about this

---

[34]"Usul" is a word used by the desert people in Frank Herbert's fictional *Dune* series. The word means, "the base of the pillar".

[35]"Jsme národ Husův a rádi se tak zoveme — avšak jsme tím národem Husovým doopravdy a ve skutečnosti? Nejsme. Ještě nejsme." Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *Jan Hus: naše obrození a naše reformace*, Jan Kanzelsberger, Prague, 1990, pg. 11.

[36]"Reformation — progress, progress — reformation" is how he once succinctly put half of the equation. ("Reformace — pokrok, pokrok — reformace.") "[T]he reformation was a renewal, a renewal ought to be a reformation." was how he similarly phrased the second half. ("...reformace byla obrozením, obrození býti má reformací..." Ibid., pp. 118, 20.

[37]And here Masaryk gives as an example Luther's admission that "we are all Hussites." Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History*, ed. and transl. by Rene Welch, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1974, pg. 10.

reformation because it was in their very nature to do so, for, "[w]e see in the Czech Reformation a deeper manifestation of the Czech soul and of our national character."[38] What, then, was this Czech "national character"?

"[A] nationality," Masaryk had remarked, "is an *idea*, it is a *feeling*. A nationality is a *moral idea*."[39] And, as Masaryk made clear, "...the ideal of *humanism*... is the idea of our reformation..."[40] Therefore since the Czech Reformation was the wellspring of Czechness, humanism was *the* idea of the Czech nation as well. It was, moreover, a distinctly *Czech* reformation and humanism, irreplaceable in world history.[41] One might even imply — and Masaryk certainly did — that because of this the modern world owed its existence to this Hus and his nation. "This is the meaning of the world reformation. Hus faithfully defended the highest ground of all of the world's nations with his very life; and in this way our nation, that stood for Hus as a nation, launched the modern era."[42]

---

[38] Ibid.

[39] "národnost je *idea*, je *cit*. Národnost je *mravní idea*." Masaryk, *Jan Hus*, pg. 113.

[40] "*...ideál humanitní*, základní a stěžejná idea, vedoucí všecko úsilí buditelské a obrodní, je idea naší reformace..." Ibid., pg. 10.

[41] "*The Czech humanist ideal* has its own historical and eternal basis in our *reformation*, and not at all in the French *revolution*; nor is liberal humanism comparable to the humanism of our reformation. Whoever wants to think and feel *Czech* must be aware of this difference." (*"Humanitní ideál český* má svůj historický i věcný základ v naší *reformaci*, nikoli ve francouské *revoluci*; humanism liberální není totožný s humanitou naší reformace. Kdo myslit a cítit chce *česky*, tohoto rozdílu musí si být vědom." Ibid., pg. 14.

[42] "To je význam reformace světový. Hus hájil životem svým věrně nejvyšších statků všech národů celého světa; a náš národ, že se postavil pro Husa jakožto národ, zahájil tím dobu novou." *Hus českému studenstvu*, Ibid., pg. 112.

Here we begin to connect with Hus. Masaryk provides us with few juicy quotes as to what Hus' role was in all of this, but it was as more than just an example or an awakener, though he played these roles as well. Masaryk often refered to the "modern era" and the "modern person." The modern person was one who was morally reformed in keeping with the tenets of humanism. It was the rise of modern individuals that initiated the modern era — the reform of their societies flowed, naturally, from this source — and *this*, according to Masaryk, was the task Hus had begun both by example and through his teachings. "The endeavor of Hus, which was also the striving for moral and religious renewal, was *the endeavor to create a new person.*"[43] This was the Czech idea — what characterized the nation's soul. Hus was the first to realize this, put the principles of moral reform into action, and stir his nation to its task, to its future.

Hus was the progenitor of the modern Czech task, of the nation's 'idea', and thus of Czechness itself. Therefore (and Masaryk obliges here) "Hus... is forever and inseparably connected to the spiritual development of the Czech nation. To think about our nation means also to think about Hus."[44] This is the explanation for something which I had initially found quite curious about Masaryk. When addressing Hus, even on July 6th (Hus' day), Masaryk felt quite free to 'jump about' in history. He could just as easily talk about Hus and the Czech reformation as the National revival, Komensky and the Czech

---

[43]"I bylo tedy úsilí Husovo úsilím o mravní a náboženské obrození, bylo *úsilím o člověka nového.*" Ibid., pg. 20 (emphasis mine).

[44]"...Hus... je neodlučně a na vždy spojen s duchovním vývojem českého národa. Myslit o našem národě, znamená myslit také o Husovi." *Hus českému studenstvu*, Ibid., pg. 110.

Brethren, the counter-reformation or the present. The reason behind this was that Hus was *in* all of (modern) Czech history for he was *in* the nation's soul and thus eternally present.

For a time the Czechs had developed their national idea (and Masaryk was quite frank about this) beyond Hus, but they had lost their way. They had fallen from Hus' path due to their own deficiencies during the counter reformation. During the Czech national revival, however, they had regained consciousness of their true "national program".[45] Masaryk thus interpreted the national revival(/reformation) as an interrupted continuation of the first reformation(/revival); a second attempt at bringing moral, humanist reform about in themselves and the European world. It was the continuance of the revival that encouraged Masaryk to remark that he felt they were on the right path today.[46]

The task was far from finished, however,[47] and this was the future President's call to arms. In a speech at Kozí Hradek on July 6th, 1910, Masaryk urged his audience on with the following.

---

[45]This is something Masaryk attributes, largely, to Palacký but also other 'awakeners'— Kollár, Šafařík and Havliček among them..

[46]"...and I think that there is good reason to hope that we are proceeeding in the spirit of Hus after all." Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History*, pp. 3-4. It should be noted that Masaryk was critical of both phases of this Czech mission. For example, he criticized the pan-slav element as well as the undue influence of Catholicism in the national revival. Masaryk rather sought to edit the legacy of the past in the present.

[47]Indeed Masaryk believed any reformation to be a perpetual, continually renewing/redefining mission. As he put it once, "A reformation is never accomplished, a reformation means continuation; reformation, this is only a word for that which we mean when we talk about development and progress today." ("Reformace není nikdy dokonána, reformace znamená... stálé pokračovaní; reformace, to je jen slovo, pro to, co dnes znamená, když mluvíme o vývoji a pokroku.") Masaryk, *Jan Hus*, pg. 116.

> Now we must come to the heart of the matter. Why are we here, what do we want, what does the Reformation mean to us today? Are we here just to listen politely to a speaker or are we troubled and stirred by Hus, is he still a living force in our lives? ... If we ponder these questions, we come to the conclusion that we would not be Czechs if we did not proceed in the direction and spirit of our reformation.[48]

He called upon Czechs to move ahead with their mission, Hus' mission. And this is where Masaryk's conception of the symbolism of Hus was brought powerfully to bear.

In his conception of Czech history Masaryk, essentially, had succeeded in collapsing time. When he spoke and wrote he dispensed with the physical and transitory, focusing instead on the spiritual, essential, timeless, and in this way he placed all of Czech history at hand as his argumentative arsenal — *present*, viable and cogent, but only to a point. That point was Hus and the Czech Reformation. "[W]e must feel our way into a kind of 'congeniality' with our reformation, so as to discover those elements that are truly national and lasting."[49] From Hus onwards — this was the modern, current Czech story. Hus' struggle was their struggle *through all time* and this, in synergy with the pre-existing symbolic value and the depth of feeling commonly invested in Hus, created a formidable cultural-political tool.

The most salient example of this is Hus' conflict with the absolute authority of the Roman Catholic church. This was explicitly equated with the contemporary Czech

---

[48]Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History*, pg. 10. The place is significant as this is where Hus spent some of his time while effectively banished from Prague (King Václav had 'asked' Hus to leave in order to relieve a Papal ban placed upon the city.), and very productive time at that. Hus realized much of his literary work during this period.

[49]Ibid., pg. 13.

struggle within the absolute authority of the Hapsburg empire several times. "If Hus stood for this, that the authority of conscience should subordinate the authority of the Church, in the same way it should subordinate *political authority, the authority of the state*."[50] In this way,

> our national, humanist idea not just for us, but for other nations as well, can and must be a firm foundation. We Czechs cannot relinquish our national essence, we must live the purpose of our history, and thus even in international and foreign politics we naturally must build on our ideas. That a Czech should afford his own, new idea to counter-reformationary Austria is natural — the counter-reformation must be overcome by the reformation, [and] only in our Czech idea does multinational Austria have its purpose and right to exist in the modern age.[51]

And here we see that Hus, as a symbol, no longer even needed to be used explicitly. What was in harmony with the Czech national spirit was in harmony with Hus: Hus' mission was the Czech mission *and* vice versa. Masaryk uses the occasions of his addresses on Hus to jump around in more than just time.[52] He used the occasion of Hus to

---

[50]"Jestliže Hus stál o to, aby se autorita církevní podřídila autoritě svědomí, tím samým téže autoritě podřídil *autoritu státní, politickou*." Masaryk, *Jan Hus*, pg. 18.

[51]"...*naše národní idea humanitní* netoliko nám, ale i národům ostatním může a musí být pevným základem. My Čechové nemůžeme se vzdát své podstaty národní, nemůžeme nežíti smyslem své historie, a proto přirozeně i v politice mezinárodní a zahraniční stavěti musíme na idei své. Že Čech protireformačnímu Rakousku přiřknul ideu svou a novou, je přirozené — protireformace reformací musí být překonána, jen v naší české idei mnohonárodní Rakouskou má pro dobu novou smysl a své právo existenční." Ibid., pg. 25 (emphasis mine).

[52]In fact, Masaryk no longer even needed to spend much time addressing Hus. In a speech delivered at an "academic celebration" of Hus on July 3rd 1904, Hus is mentioned only a few times. Masaryk instead used the occasion (and the implicit power of the symbol behind it) to argue for contemporary religious and spiritual reform in the Czech nation.

address issues such a reformation of the Austro-Hungarian empire along lines of increased national autonomy, the introduction of greater civil liberties and democracy, religious and spiritual reform and even the need for the freedom of religious confession. These causes were Czech and therefore in keeping with the spirit, the path, of Hus. Through this soulful association Hus is used to implicitly baptize and sanctify these causes as *truly* Czech.[53]

In many ways Masaryk's conception of Hus in Czech culture (both contemporary and historical) was simply an extension of the pre-existing, predominant conception of Czech history. Palacký (by now quite commonly referred to as "the father of the nation") had folded into his history the idea of the exceptional spirituality of the Czech nation, that this special national genius manifested itself in the Czech Reformation, that the Czechs had persevered "proti všem" due to their spiritual, moral character, that the Czech lands and people — in time and space — had been the anvil upon which modern Europe and modernity itself were forged. Hus, again, is at least implicitly the prime mover in all this. Palacký's 'program' was to 'regain consciousness' of this; what the Czechs had been and could be again.

Masaryk's views on Hus suggest that he was very much in step with another one of his national paladins, Karel Havliček. Havliček, too, was brashly present-centered, using Hus as an argument against the undue influence of clericalism in Bohemia during the 1850's.

The speech is reprinted in Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *V boji o náboženství*, 3rd ed., *Čin*, Prague, 1947.

[53]And so, somehow, (and to mention only the most ridiculous example) we have arrived at a point where Hus — a man who died in large part *because* he believed in the universal church — is being used to argue for the toleration of religious multiplicity.

Hus was an example for Czechs to follow. Havliček was an unapologetic pragmatist with respect to history — he asked what the present needed of the past and found it.

Even in the events of 1868-9 covered in the first essay we can see how these currents became manifest in a wider body public. However Masaryk's 'mission' was also in keeping with the widest possible contextual circle of Czech cultural views on their history. "[H]istory is written for instruction," wrote Skalický. "How we are today and how we will be in the future depend upon it."[54] This, I think, is a general statement that might be said to embrace the Czech mentality regarding history. History was *supposed* to affect the present and the future.

So, in many ways, Masaryk simply brought into bolder relief what was already present in the Czech views of history and Hus, but he also supplied something for which the Czech culture of his time seemed to be thirsting.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a tremendous rapidity and drama of societal and cultural change in Bohemia. Politically, too, the period witnessed the birth of political parties other than the traditional Old and Young Czechs (the National and the National Liberal Parties, respectively), and it is a change in this realm that quite commonly and justifiably attracts the attention of historians as a watershed.

The Old Czech party led by the awakener František Ladislav Rieger were simply crushed (37-2) by the Young Czechs in the 1891 elections to the Austrian Reichstag. It was a defeat that had been brewing, really, for more than a decade and it held a meaning that

---

[54]"...dějiny jsou psány pro poučení... Záleží na tom, jakými jsme nyní a jakými budeme v budoucnost." Skalický, pp. 11-12.

extended beyond the narrow realm of pure politics. In keeping with the Czech tradition, men such as Rieger had been cultural as well as political leaders. These were the 'idea men', and the 1880s had witnessed a changing of the guard in this sphere. But in moving beyond the 'old', what was the 'new' to be?

This is the sort of angst that prompted the provocative questions Hubert Schauer asked in the inaugural issue of *Čas* (1886). "What is our national existence like?", Schauer queried, "What is our nation's task?"[55] It was hardly that the older conception of the nation suddenly became defunct. The near sacred importance of the nation's history and language, to point to two obvious examples, remained. Rather, increasingly, it was no longer completely satisfactory. People wanted something more.[56] Masaryk addressed himself to this more, to this "task", and he struck a responsive chord: the influence of Masaryk can be felt in many other views of Hus.

Modern Love

Ladislav Šaloun wrote the following in 1903: "Czech history is practically Hus' history. From this mysterious and immense figure; the personification of our true instincts; a

---

[55]Quoted in Miloš Havelka, "Spor o smyslu českých dějin, 1895-1938", pp. 7-43 in *Spor o smyslu českých dějin*, Torst, Prague, 1997, pg. 12.

[56]For example, the following comes from the pages of *Zlatá Praha*. "We, the people of today, are searching for a new expression of these answers, the old symbols no longer satisfy us..." Judging from the commentary in the rest of this issue and the one that followed (č. 37), Masaryk's expression of the Czech answer did provide satisfaction (and then some). ("My lidé dnešní doby hledáme nový výraz pro tyto odpovědi, staré symboly nám již nestačí...") *Zlatá Praha*, 1903, r. XX, č. 36, pg. 422.

conscious yearning for truth and for freedom, a figure which, really, became the father of his nation."[57] In the same piece the artist stated that "[Hus] was a pioneer of humanity and the spirit of his people."[58] Ten years later, in the piece already mentioned above, Šaloun wondered, rhetorically, whether the unveiling of his statue would "merge with the international spirit of brotherly unity which, in the name of Hus, might watch over the spiritual and moral development of the Czech people?"[59] He also expressed the desire "that our aim should be the ennobling of humanity... Let us continue down the path upon which You set us, Master!"[60]

Regarding the famous Czech writer Alois Jirásek the case is similar. His 1911 play on Hus[61] reverberated with the spiritual-cum-national symbolism of Hus. Throughout the play, but especially in a meeting of 'ordinary' Czechs and Germans in Act I, scenes i-vii,

---

[57]"Historie česká je téměř historií Husovou. Toho tajemného a nesmírného zjevu který je skutečným zosovněním naší instinktivní; vědomé touhy po pravdě a po svobodě, zjevu, který stal se skutečným tatem svého národa." Ladislav Šaloun, *Dva návrhý na pomník M. Jana Husi v Praze*, Manes, Prague, 1903 (unpaginated).

[58]"[Hus] [b]yl průkopníkem lidstva a duší svého lidu." Ibid.

[59]"...spojili se k všenárodní duchové, bratrské jednotě, která by ve jménu Husově pro všecky časy budoucí starala se o duchový a mravní vývin českého lidu?" Šaloun, "1915", pg. 3.

[60]The capitalization of "You" and "Master," it should be noted, occur in Šaloun's original text. "...aby bylo našim cílem ryzí, ušlechtilé lidství... Půjdeme dále cestou, na niž Jsi nás uvedl Mistře!" Ibid.

[61]Entitled, capriciously, "Jan Hus". The city council of Prague had initiated the contest for a new play (Tyl's work must have been feeling somewhat tired by this time) to accompany the unveiling of the Hus monument. The contest was supposed to close in 1914 but when Jirásek submitted his "Hus" in 1911 the city simply closed the contest and declared Jirásek the winner (a testament to the extremely high regard in which the writer was held).

the Czechs seem honest, moral, peaceful and spiritual, especially by contrast to the false, malicious, violent and materialistic Germans. During Hus' exile from Prague he comments on how many people came to hear him preach wherever he went through the countryside and "how they listened and opened their hearts to the gospel, and gladly took it in. There the seed fell on good soil."[62] These, moreover, were the real Czech *lid* of national-historical legend, and they took to Hus' preaching like ducks to water. And the Czech task? "I will not stop preaching," Hus maintains early in the play, "nor reprimanding, nor exhorting people to a *new* and true life..."[63] One of the final acts of Jirásek's Hus was to call to the future. "I hope, I believe, that the new, better life which I painted upon the peoples' hearts in Bethlehem chapel will be painted by more and better preachers than I..."[64] From soon-to-be-flaming hands Hus passed the torch, and so the Czech mission began.

I could easily continue, but I would like to skip to something a bit more surprising. "What sort of meaning do the Hus celebrations hold in the Czech nation today, after half a millennium?" asked another writer (and earlier in his text he had indicated that this was the key question). "While in the sway of reverence and thanks before the memory of Hus, we remember not only one of the greats who shook the course of history so that his nation,

---

[62]"HUS: ...jak naslouchal a svá srdce evangeliu otvíral a rád je přijímal. Na dobrou půdu tam símě dopadlo." Alois Jirásek, *Jan Hus: Historická hra o pěti dějstvích*, Osvěta, Prague, 1951, pp. 129-30.

[63]"HUS: Nepřestanu kázat, kárat a lid nabádat k *novému*, pravému životu..." Ibid., pp. 53-4 (emphasis mine).

[64]"HUS: Doufám, věřím, že nový, lepší život, který jsem v Betlemě maloval v srdcích lidských, bude malován od četnějších a lepších kazatelů nežli já..." Ibid., pg. 194.

and all of humanity, might become freer, more erudite and better. At the same time we celebrate the intellectual and moral capability of our national stock."[65] The author of these words was none other than the historian Josef Pekař.

For anyone already fairly well acquainted with Czech history this name should trip some alarm bells of disbelief (it certainly did for me). Pekař was, after all, Masaryk's main opponent in the great historiographical controversy that erupted in the early 20th century over the meaning of Czech history. Essentially the controversy witnessed two camps pitted against each other — what might be described as Masaryk's and Jaroslav Goll's 'schools'. Those in Masaryk's school, including Jan Herben and Jaroslav Vančura as well as the professor-cum-politician himself maintained and defended the value of Masaryk's architectonic views of Czech history, while those in Goll's camp (most notably Josef Pekař and Kamil Krofta) attacked this view in favor of a *more* strictly historical approach. The dispute was quite lengthy and extremely acrimonious. Thus it is quite surprising, even in 1907 (a few years before the controversy truly erupted), to find Pekař expressing opinions on the meaning of Hus that are *very much* in step with those of Masaryk. The views of others associated with the 'Goll school' could be as well.

In a speech on Hus' day in 1915, Václav Novotný, the most prominent of Goll's former students at the time, said that Hus' "efforts for moral revival," characterized his whole

---

[65]"Jaký význam mají oslavy Husovy v národě českém dnes, po půltisiciletí? ... Skláněnjíce se v úctě a díku před památkou Husovou, vzpomínáme nejen jednoho z velikánů, kteří otřásli dějinami, aby národ svůj a lidstvo vůbec učinili svobodnějším, vzdělanějším a lepším, ale oslavujeme zároveň rozumovou a mravní schopnost našeho kmene národního." Josef Pekař, *Jan Hus*, Národní Sociální Dělnictva, Prague, 1907, pp. 15-16.

life.[66]

> And here we are at that change between the past and today, about which I have said, we crossed not without thanks to Hus. That it is possible today to remember the five hundredth anniversary of Hus' death, that it is possible to trace the whole of the phenomenon of Hus — for it is this which is great — this is thanks to that huge upheaval of all human thought, to that magnificent progress to which Hus so fundamentally contributed.[67]

This was why Hus was "one of the most memorable men in human history," and, "one of the greatest sons of our nation."[68]

Let us turn to Kamil Krofta, another of Masaryk's more vocal adversaries in the dispute over the meaning of Czech history. Krofta admitted that many of Hus' writings were simply a reworking of those of John Wyclif, "however surely in these works there is so much belonging to Hus' spirit, so many places of Hussite character and therefore, also, of Czech character."[69] Here Hus is equated to Czechness — his 'legacy' or 'inheritance' was

---

[66]"...svého mravně obrodního úsilí, jemuž celý jeho život byl zasvěcen." Václav Novotný, *Mistr Jan Hus v historii a ve veřejném své doby*, Melantrich, Prague, 1915, pg. 12.

[67]"A zde jsme u oné změny mezi dřívějškem a dneškem, o níž jsem řekl, že se dostavila ne bez přičinění Husova. Že jest dnes možno vzpomínati pětistého výročí smrti Husovy, že jest možno vytýčiti celý zjev Husův, neboť ten jest to, který jest veliký, o to zásluha přísluší onomu ohromnému převratu všeho myšlení lidského, onomu velikolepému pokroku, k jehož umožnění právě Hus tak podstatně přispěl," Ibid., pg. 11.

[68]"...jeden z nejpamátnějších mužů v dějinách lidstva, jeden z největších synů našeho národa...". Ibid., pg. 7.

[69]"... přece však je v nich toliko duševního majetku Husova, tolik míst ryze husovských a proto také ryze českých..." Kamil Krofta, "M. Jan Hus a jeho význam v českých dějinách do Bílé Hory", pp. 7-27 in *Mistr Jan Hus v životě a památkách českého lidu, Českého čtenáře*, Prague, 1915, pg. 16.

passed on through the nation/time (importantly, through the medium of the Hussites). Krofta further wrote of "the thoughts and principles instilled in the Czech nation through Hus."[70] Bila Hora had "alienated" most of the nation from the teaching of "their saint", but even here, in the darkest times, "at least a minority stayed faithful to Hus' legacy and continued to work for its preservation and towards its completion."[71]

This sounds suspiciously influenced by Masaryk, but what of Hus 'today'? "It is not possible to compare Hus' theoretical opinions with those of the modern world nor his morality, founded, as it is, to too great a degree on the aesthetic ideals of medieval Christianity, they cannot be our guide to life." Here is a real difference between Masaryk and Krofta... or is it? Krofta continued, "Therefore we stand with Hus not for the contents of his teachings but for their *spirit* by which they speak to the conditions of our era. It is the spirit of progress and spiritual freedom."[72]

I am very much reminded of Masaryk's statement that "[b]odily, physically," "nothing" bound the Czech nation to Hus. "[O]nly spirit can bind us to spirit".[73] And the spirit of Hus does seem to be what binds him to the nation in these writers as well. Though they

---

[70]"...myšlenky a zásady vštípené národu českému Husem." Ibid., pg. 27.

[71]"...aspoň ve své menšině zůstal věren odkazu Husovu, pracuje dále o jeho zachování a zdokonalení." Kamil Krofta, *Mistr Jan Hus*, 3rd ed., akciové tiskárny, Prague, 1913, pg. 15.

[72]"Jako Husovy názory theoretické nelze srovnati s moderním názorem světovým, tak ani jeho morálka, založená příliš na asketickém ideále středověkého křesťanství, nemůže nám již býti vodítkem pro život. Hlasíme se tedy k Husovi ne pro obsah jeho učení, nýbrž pro ducha, jímž se vyznačuje v poměru ke své době. Je to duch pokroku a svobodny duševní." Ibid., 1913, pg. 15 (emphasis mine).

[73]Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History*, pp. 3-4.

are not as blunt and sustained as Masaryk, Hus is undeniably integral to modern Czechness for all of these men as well, whether it was simply as a "great son of the nation" or as an archetype of the characteristics of his "national stock," etc. Furthermore all of these men tied Hus to modernity and not in a static sense, but in the sense of a continuous motion forward into a better future. In a word (and all of them used it) they connected Hus to the powerful idea of progress.[74] I return to Pekař.

> For this reason let us learn from Hus and the Czech Hussites to zealously sacrifice for a national and progressive cause, that, as in the time of Hus, in a struggle with our national enemies we shall be victorious only when our Czechnesss shall be armed with thoughts of rational progress and not forgetting that without moral fortitude, without a willingness to bear sacrifice, there is no success and there will be no victory.[75]

But enough of this. It is easy, I think, to overstate the similarities between the two 'camps' with regards to Hus (though this ease itself is quite revealing). I would rather not indulge too greatly in the same historical 'sins' of those whom I study. Surely, there are real differences as well[76] and, I would like to stress, again, that I am not making any claims

---

[74]As Masaryk stated simply but powerfully, "we have a belief in progress, and even if we examine it most soberly, we shall learn that this belief is justified. This belief has something downright religious in itself." Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *Ideály Humanitní*, 9th ed., Čin, Prague, 1946 (originally published 1901), pg. 47.

[75]"Učme se proto od Husa a od českých husitů obětovnému nadšení pro věc národní a pokrokovou, uvědomuje se, že jako v době Husově, v boji s našimi nepřátely národními zvítězíme jen tenkrat, když češství naše vyzbrojeno bude myšlénkami rozumového pokroku a nezapomínejme, že bez mravní vytrvalosti, bez odhodlání nésti oběti, není úspěchu a nebude vítězství." Pekař, pg. 16.

[76]The adherents of Goll's school certainly seemed *much* more willing to perceive the difference, the otherness, of the past, and yet when it came to Hus they seemed to

as to the similarity of, for example, Pekař's and Masaryk's views regarding the wider fields of Czech history and historiography.[77] My purpose has been to demonstrate the depth and breadth to which Masaryk's extension of Hus had penetrated Czech culture, for it is at the very least *strongly implicit* in the views of those who, in different venues, opposed 'Masaryk's mission'.

There were more significantly different variants of Hus' mission extant however. Olga Stránská, for example, utilized the symbolic meaning of Hus to justify the Czech feminist movement. "For Hus brought the essence of his teachings out of the soul of the nation, that we should be forthright and honorable and live as reason and feeling command. No Pope or church shall ever outlast or destroy this dogma, for it lives on in our souls."[78]

---

have trouble resisting the pull towards meaning so heartily invested in Hus as a symbol of their Czechness. Novotný, for example, definitely delved into the otherness of Hus: he did see difference. His speech contained the admission that what Novotný's era would think of as free debate and reason, would not have coincided with Hus' conception of these same ideas. (Novotný, pg. 10) In fact, the whole 2nd half of his speech is quite historical, even going so far as to explain the Roman Catholic position of the middle ages in terms of a different mentality (see especially pp. 20-21). Still this is in conflict with the prevailing mentality of Novotný's time and it shows. Novotný also stresses Hus' meaning "today", that Hus "lives" as an example and a "model". One of the most revealing examples of this conflict within the Czech historian is how Novotný admits that Hus was still "just human" with faults (pg. 8), and yet his praise of him (frequent, but see, for example, pg. 11) elsewhere makes Hus sound like a super hero.

[77]Although the patent similarity in Hus hints that, in some instances at least, the two camps were not as far apart in *practice* as they maintained they were in *theory*. Hus (and the Hussites) might well be an interesting vehicle by which to explore this hypothesis, but I feel that I have already belabored this point for the purposes of my interests and topic.

[78]"Neboť Hus vyvážil z duše národa podstatu svého učení, abychom byli upřímní a čestní a žili tak, jak velí rosum a cit. Toť dogma, jež žádný papež a žádná církev nepřetrvá a nezničí, protože žije stále v našich dušich." *NL* 7.7.1912.

Three years later she wrote, "to continue in the footsteps of Hus. Czech women cannot better celebrate his memory."[79] Here, so far, we see some very familiar pieces of Hus as symbol 'in action' as it were. But Stránská gave these same pieces a very different spin. "A Czech woman has the greatest cause for inspiration in the remembrance of Master Jan Hus. He laid out the basis of her thinking. Women's emancipation is merely a consequence of the advance of humanity and of free thinking."[80] Using the same symbol, and in a very similar way, Stranska ends up with quite a different result — Hus guiding the Czech nation towards women's emancipation.

Following, again, many of the symbol's familiar contours, Edvard Beneš utilized the occasion of Hus to exhort the nation to examine its social difficulties. "Hus and his meaning," Beneš wrote, "we have hitherto explored from the moral and religious perspectives; what arose after him and was let loose through his entailing of Hussitism and the whole Czech reformation is generally judged in this regard." And, so far, Beneš has done nothing but give us a fairly accurate, though only partial, synopsis of the current, predominant view of Hus. He sought, however, to shift this and the means he employed to do this were very Czech. "In our [national] life today, however, social questions are occupying a greater and greater meaning. And it would surely be a great, commemorative action, if we could find in our national past all that relates to the social question in its

---

[79] "To znamená pokračovati ve stopách Husových. Lépe nemohou památku jeho oslaviti české ženy." *NL*(příl.), 4.7.1915.

[80] "Česká žena má nejvíce příčin vznítiti vzpomínku na Mistra Jana Husa. Položil základ k jejímu myšlení. Ženská emancipace je jen důsledkem stoupajícího lidství a svobody myšlení." *NL* 7.7.1912.

modern sense."[81]

Beneš urged the nation to re-examine itself socially in the present through the medium of re-writing its past from a social point of view, and the period he chose to focus on should, by this time, surprise no one. He referred to "the name of Hus, Husitism and the entire Czech reformation" as being "the axis, the pivotal point and loftiest peak of all our efforts to solve the social problems of the past."[82] Indeed Beneš even modified and utilized the idea of the 'specialness' of the Czech people. For if the Czechs were to re-evaluate their past from a social perspective "[w]e would see how, truly, these problems were always more lively, acute and sensitive in our nation than anywhere else."[83] Here, and in keeping with the modification he wishes to make, the Czech people are counted as special not for their moral and spiritual proclivity, but by virtue of the heightened social suffering in their past, and the 'seat' of this special Czechness is, again, to be found in the time of Hus and the reformation he began.

These are different, and yet only in the sense that they are variations: they are branches

---

[81]"Na Husa a jeho význam doposavad hledíme především s hlediska mravního a náboženského; v tom smyslu se všeobecné také posozuje, co vzniklo po něm a mělo východisko v jeho působení husitism a celá česká reformace. V dnešním našem životě však stále většího a většího významu nabývají otázky sociální. A byl by to jistě veliký čin oslavný, kdybychom mohli shledati ve své národní minulosti všecko to, co má vztah k sociální otázce v dnešním jejím smyslu..." Edvard Beneš, "Hus a sociální problémy dneška", pp. 9-10 in *Husův památník: slavnostní list k 6. Červenci 1913*, ed. Dr. Fr. Loskot, Volné myšlenky, Praha, 1913, pg. 9.

[82]The full quote reads, "A v těch by právě jméno Husovo, husitism a celá reformace, české bratrství bylo osou, stěžejním bodem a vrcholným vypjetím všech našich snah o luštění sociálních problémů v minulosti." Ibid.

[83]"Viděli bychom, jak právě u nás byly tyto problémy vždy živěji prociťovány a cítěny nežli jinde." Ibid.

of a tree. And the reason for this somewhat paradoxical phenomenon of similarity in difference lies in the continued and amplified *function* of Hus as a symbol in Czech cultural life during the period.

One nation under Hus

Throughout this essay I have frequently touched upon many of the milieus of meaning in which the symbol of Hus was functional and this is as it should be, really. Hus' meanings and uses were all mixed together in what the Czechs might call a "gulaš" (goulash); we should not be able to separate these different elements quite so cleanly as chemicals in a laboratory. If the reader reflects upon the essay to this point, however, I hope that she will recall how Hus was used to symbolize what Czechs were at least supposed to be like. Through Hus the Czechs learned that they were moral, educated, reasonable, humanist, peaceful,[84] honest and willing to sacrifice for the truth.

These were not static qualities. Embodied as they were in human beings they were active. They moved and guided Czechs, both individually and as a group, towards the future; a better future. In this way all of these qualities combined to be more than the sum of their parts. For reason, morality, humanism, truth — these were all concepts which meshed into the idea of progress and thus the Czechs were inherently a progressive

---

[84]*Generally*, peaceful. The Hussites were used to show a different side of the Czech character; that, if sufficiently provoked and in the defense of morality, truth and (it could be added at this time) thus progress, the Czechs were capable of being a force to be reckoned with.

people. This, too, had been breathed into the national soul by Hus.

And, make no mistake about it, this was what *all* Czechs were supposed to think of Hus and thus be like. Hus was utilized, forcefully, to demarcate who was and who was not Czech during this period and the rhetoric in this regard is often chilling. In the previously mentioned article "Hus?" by Václav Flajšhans, he concluded "For we are all Czechs and from all of us on the 6th of July to the simple question

Hus?

comes the clear answer, from the depths of our soul,

Yes — Hus!"[85]

Examples such as this maintaining that *all* Czechs are(/should) be united under the symbolism of Hus are nigh omnipresent, but what of those who refused Hus' Czech communion? "There are many of this kind of weakling, unfortunately," wrote Flajšhans in addressing himself to this question, "who have accepted that compromise (and always, they say, that in their hearts they are still Czechs even if they have cast aside their Czech Christian name, even if they are hiding under a glaring pseudonym)— and all of these on today's day of the soul say — 'No — Hus!'"[86] Flajšhans deftly and sharply brings into question the Czechness of those who refuse Hus as their badge of identity by implying that

---

[85]"Neboť všichni jsme Čechové a ve všech nás dnes, 6. července, no prostou otázku

Hus?

ozve se jistě v hloubi duše

Ano — Hus!" Flajšhans in *NL* 6.7.1908.

[86]"Je mnoho takových slabochů, bohužel, kteří přijali ten kompromis (vždyť prý v srdci zůstane stále Čechem, co na tom, odloží-li české jméno křestní, skryje-li se za zvučný pseudonym)— a všem těm zní na dně duše —'Ne — Hus!'" Ibid.

these are the same sort of traitors who cast off their Czech names in favor of German ones in order to advance further and faster professionally. Similarly, though less stridently, Masaryk labelled those who participated in the Cyril and Methodius celebrations as "counter-reformationary," and thus, "*unCzech*."[87]

During the war however this usage became sharper. Masaryk, who, significantly, used the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Hus' death to bring his plans for Czech independence into the public eye, stated in his address that, "[t]he reformation gave purpose to our national life, and in it *all Czechs* that are not estranged from the life of their own nation, find their ideal, visible and concrete." Thus, "[e]very Czech that knows the past of his own land must decide for himself; to be for Czech thought — or for Austrian thinking, the instrument of European reaction."[88] This was black and white: one had to choose either to be in or out of 'Czechness'.

The flip side of this was presented in a speech made by the politician Karel Baxa at a small gathering[89] hosted by the Association for the Construction of Hus' Memorial. Baxa

---

[87]The full quote reads: "Those who support the, so called, Cyril-Methodist idea are continuing on a course that is counter reformationary, *unCzech*." ("Ti, kdo hlásají ideu tzv. cyrilomethodějskou, pokračují na této dráze protiobrodní, *nečeské*.") Masaryk, *Jan Hus*, Pg. 11.

[88]"Reformace česká dala smysl našemu národnímu životu, a v ní právě *všichni Čechové*, kteří nejsou odcizeni životu svého národa, nacházejí svůj ideál, viditelný a konkrétní." Ibid., pg. 153. "Každý Čech, který zná minulost své země, musí se rozhodnout buď pro reformaci — nebo pro protireformace; buď pro myšlenku českou — nebo pro myšlenku Rakouska, nástroje evropské reakce." Ibid.

[89]A small gathering, but *Národní Listy* maintained, "that yesterday afternoon the *whole nation* was present through the representatives of all its strata." ("...konstatujeme, že včera dopoledne byl na pražské radnici zastoupen celý národ svými representaty ze všech vrstev jeho.") *NL* 7.7.1915 (emphasis mine).

quoted what, for Czechs, was probably Hus' most famous piece of writing, a letter to "all faithful Czechs"[90] that Hus had written shortly before his execution.

> 'I beg that you love one another, not let good be oppressed by force and wish for every one the truth.' ... Would only that all good, faithful Czechs find so much manliness, consideration and self-control that we should come together in reconciliation in and between ourselves that the next era find us, hitherto dispersed and wandering, as a single, great, purposeful, national whole rushing towards a happier future! (Excellent! Universal applause.)[91]

Was one on or off of the Czech island?[92] The stigma of being declared "unCzech" was complemented by the prospect of still being welcomed in Hus' Czechness. Thus it was that the olive branch could be extended to the Catholics. "It is well known to us all," as one speaker put it, "what Hus is to us, and this not only for Protestants but for Catholics as well, that Hus is truly holy to every one of us. (Universal agreement)"[93] Again, as

---

[90] *Časopis Českého Musea* had published the same letter in 1848 shortly before the Bach regime truly began to crack down and the whole Museum began to "sleep", as Karel Sabina put it in a letter to J. V. Frič. ("Celé Museum spí tvrdý sen lenosti!" Personal correspondence of Sabina to Frič, 1860, unpublished). I wonder if this was the beginning of this letter's function as a trope in Czech culture — an appeal for Czechs to unite in times of trouble.

[91] 'Prosím, abyste se milovali vespolek, dobrých násilím tlačiti nedali a pravdy každému přáli.' ... Kéž najdou všichni dobří, věrní Čechové tolik zmužilosti, odvahy a a sebekázně, abychom došli k usmíření v sobě samých a mezi sebou aby nás dosud rosptylené a těkající našly příští doby jako jediný, veliký, cilevědomý národní celek, spějící ke šťastnější budoucnosti! (Vyborně! Všeobecný potlesk.)" Baxa in *NL* 7.7.1915.

[92] The image continually comes to mind of Hus as the Czech equivalent of 'Uncle Sam', pointing a bony finger out at the viewer and demanding, "Are YOU věrný?"

[93] "Nám všem jest to povědomo, ale právě vůči vzrůstající klerikální agitaci musíme opakovati stále a stále, čím Hus nám, a sice nejen evangelikům, ale i katolikům, jest, že je nám posvátným všem. (Všeobecný souhlas)" *NL* 8.7.1898. p. Podkipský Speaking at a

Flajšhans had written, "Hus, simply, is a symbol of our Czechness *in all of its most beautiful range.*"

And there *was* an increasing range to this Czechness. I have already mentioned the diversifying nature of Czech society in this time period, and this leads me back to the somewhat paradoxical similarity in difference that I had mentioned earlier. Hus was such a well established, almost mandatorily deeply felt and believed symbol of Czechness that, in combination with the progressive meaning he had come to lend that identity, his interpretation had become integral to the battle for the Czech future. Thus if one had a different vision of the Czech future than that of the mainstream one was obliged to reinterpret Hus. And it is not simply that one would have thought this, one would have *felt* it. It would not have occurred to a Czech to ignore Hus. We all grow up in a cultural context and, as a result of this, have an intuitive, almost instinctive grasp for the levers and buttons to be pushed and pulled if we wish to affect that culture's reproduction of itself in the present-becoming-future — we reach for and use them naturally, almost without thinking.[94] Almost every Czech from the turn of the century had grown up immersed in the national/spiritual symbolism of Hus and it was natural (and perhaps even imperative) for them to reach for this cultural lever.

The catch was, however, that precisely because a pre-established meaning of Hus was so deeply and broadly entrenched in the Czech mentalité there was, on the surface of things,

---

gathering in Prague.

[94]I, for example, find it disturbingly natural (almost an instinct against which I must consciously fight) to slip back into the Albertan dogma of 'efficiency'.

very little room to maneuver in his reinterpretation. Thus a Czech feminist or socialist of the early 20th century was stuck with the basic form and content of Hus as a symbol that we have seen used so often in the preceding pages. There was a way out of this catch, however, and both Stránská and Beneš found it. One could play into the existing symbolism of Hus and give it a different spin.

Luckily the familiar elements of Hus lent themselves readily to this purpose. The ideas posited in Czechness through Hus — freedom, truth, morality — had always been somewhat vague. The idea of progress — the central idea with which Hus had now been infused — fit into this mold quite nicely. One simply needed to appropriate the symbol of Hus to support a different type of progress. Progress for Stránská was women's emancipation. Beneš wanted to see progress in the social realm and he turned, naturally, to Hus and the Hussite period.

Continuance

I have searched for the words that might summarize what Hus functionally *was* in turn of the century Bohemia without dipping into the siren-like waters of hyperbole and the closest I have been able to come is that the Hus symbol acted as a directional identity map. He demarcated who belonged in which group and what those groups were like,[95] but the map of Hus also provided direction. Hus pointed to where Czechs believed they should be

---

[95]Reality was, at least, supposed to strive to correspond to the fiction and I think that to some extent, through the powers of self-fulfilling prophecy, it did.

going. The topographical features of this map as well as the political boundaries could be played with somewhat. The direction could be as well, though, for progress was a highly malleable target.

Chapter III

Liberation

Any description of the tremendous suffering visited upon the Czech lands during World War II appears trite in comparison to the reality experienced by millions. Concentration camps, the near annihilation of the country's Jewish population, families torn apart when their young men were sent off to perform forced labor, food shortages, and simply going about the business of living under a regime of fear for seven years — these were a few of the facts of life in the Bohemian and Moravian 'Protectorate' established by the Nazis during the war. And the sum of these experiences forms the profound backdrop to the emergence of a version of Hus at once both new and old.

If we were to look at the cover of the inaugural issue of *Svět v obrazéch* ("The world in pictures") published on the 15th of June, mere weeks after the country's liberation, we would see a picture of the Hus monument in Prague. During the fascist occupation it had been covered in the black, white and red of the Nazi flag but it stood free of this now in the photograph. We are given a slightly odd view of the monument: the camera was held low and to the side of Hus, who seems to tower over us. Our eyes are also attracted to one of the monuments' inscriptions that, from our point of view, sits in the center of the monument. "O Czech people — I believe the control of your own affairs shall return to

you again."[1]

During the occupation the celebration of Hus had been forbidden. Thus July of 1945 was the first unrestrained celebration of Hus the Czechs had held since 1938, and unrestrained it certainly was. This Hus day witnessed an unparalleled outpouring of emotion connected with Hus.[2] Again, the celebrations consumed multiple days. Over 100 000 people gathered at *Řip*[3], another 100 000 gathered in Kozí Hrádek in southern Bohemia, and over 12 000 "working people" attended an assembly at Dvůr Králova. The main ceremony in Prague was infused with layers of richly symbolic meaning. The events began in *Staroměstské náměstí* with the lighting of a pyre. Torches lit from this and carrying the "flame of revolution"[4] were then relayed through crowds of people stretching to pyres on heights all around Prague and to the freshly constructed Liberation monument where one of the torches ignited another pyre. This was the signal for all of the other pyres around Prague to be lit and for the beginning of the military celebration. The nation's liberation had been ceremonially and symbolically melded with the liberation of "Husova oslava", the nation with Hus. But these were merely some of the main events as across the

---

[1]"Věřím že vláda věci tvych k tobě se zase navrátí — o lide český" *Svět v obrazech*, roč. I, č. 1, 1945, cover page.

[2]And *this*, given the excitement and romance surrounding, for example, the pilgrimage to Husinec in 1869 and the laying of the foundation stone for the Hus monument in 1903, is saying something.

[3]The symbolic conjunction of Hus with *Řip* at this time is meaningful. Hus was being connected with the mythological origins of the Czech people and their destiny to own the Czech lands. Please see Chapter 1, footnote #4 for more details on the symbolic significance of *Řip*.

[4]"...plamen revoluce..." See *SS* 5 and 8.7.1945 for more details of the celebration.

country celebrations of Hus and his nation were held in which "millions" were said to have taken part.[5]

In this time of joy and anger, but also of transition and uncertainty, the Czech nation, almost as a whole, turned to this rich symbol of itself as sustenance for its identity. Nor was this only an act of re-acquaintance; an intra-cultural reaffirmation of what the Czechs believed themselves to be. In a manner truly and tragically Czech, the Czechs turned to Hus to divine their future through their past. Whither should the nation go?[6]

The academic turned politician Zdeněk Nejedlý (the Communist Minister of Culture and Education in the new government) was quite active in all of this, delivering speeches both to the Czech youth in Prague on July 5th, to the massive gathering at *Říp* the following day and at other occasions during this liberated "Hus' week".[7] More importantly, however, Nejedlý had lain the historiographical/cultural groundwork[8] for much of the reinterpretation of Hus-as-symbol that would play its role in this phase of the ongoing

---

[5]See *SS* 8.7.1945.

[6]As J. B. Souček expalined it: "in momentous times and especially in difficult times our nation shall always return right here for reinforcement and orientation; this is the actual sense and value of the proportions and zeal of this year's celebration of Hus." ("...náš národ se v dobách opravdu velkých a zejména v dobách těžkých pro posilu a orientaci vždy bude obracet právě sem; to je vlastní smysl a hodnota rozměrů a horlivosti letošních oslav Husových.") "Na okraj letošních Husových oslav" *Kostnické jiskry*, r. XXX (1945), č. 17-18. Souček had some serious concerns as to the orientation posited in Hus, but agreed that Hus should perform this function.

[7]There is a return to this terminology as well. See *SS* 8.7.1945.

[8]Nejedlý's views were quite influential. For example, the Communist party organ *Rovnost* often simply reprinted portions of his *Hus a naše doba* on or around Hus' day. More revealing though, is how closely other articles 'paraphrased' (to be generous) him. See, for example, the article "Mistr Jan Hus — učitel Lidu" in *Rovnost*, 4.7.1948.

production of the Czech future.

Nejedlý

Nejedlý had originally published his *Hus a naše doba* ("Hus and our era") in 1919, and it shows. In many ways it is very much in keeping with the Masarykian interpretation of Hus that was discussed in the previous essay. For Nejedlý's Hus, too, had been endeavoring to clear "a path to a better future." He had been, "a builder of the new world", and as such, progressive. As such Hus had been the first "modern man"[9] and thus, "[a]ll of the proceeding era is really nothing other than the constantly greater and better approach to and realization of that with which Hus and his people [the Hussites] had come for the first time."[10] That with which Hus had come was what Nejedlý loosely referred to as "Hus' program", and, "even here [in this program] we see that quite a new age began through Hus, and that age is for us today still actual, for that with which Hus came to this very day is not resolved. We also fight for this."[11] Hus' program was still with the nation. "Our

---

[9]"...uvolnit cestu lepší budoucnost.", "...budovatel nového světa.", "...novodobý člověk." Zdeněk Nejedlý *Hus a naše doba*, Svoboda, Prague, 1947, pp. 19, 22, 57. It is not something that I pretend to know very much about, but it seems interesting to me that Hus, as the first 'modern man', often serves in the role of what I call 'the off-ramp to the future' in a way very similar to that which Martin Luther served in German historiography.

[10]"Celá další doba, i dnešek, není vlastně nic jiného, než stále větší a lepší přibližovaní se a uskutečňování toho, s čím poprvé přišel Hus a jeho lidé." Ibid. pg. 49.

[11]"...i tu [in "Husův program"] vidíme, že Husem počíná zcela nová doba, a to doba i pro nás dnes stále aktuální, neboť s čím Hus přišel, není ani dnes vyřízeno, i my o to bojujeme." Ibid., pg. 26.

task, therefore is to execute this [program], to steer as Hus did."[12] None of this sounds new.

Yet many would maintain that Nejedlý's Hus was very different, for here Hus' program was, "actually the socialist program of the new era which, in its various modifications, is also the program of all further efforts for the progress of humanity until today."[13] Nejedlý noted that this program had been punctuated by three points:

1. The law of the collective.

2. The abolition of private ownership.

3. The equality of people.

Hus had been the herald, "not of a new religion, but of a new social order".[14] Hus had been struggling against the Roman Catholic church only because he had seen the truth behind it — the church was merely an "organizational medium" for "the economic, social and political organization of the world."[15] In this Hus had been a "revolutionary" and Nejedlý found "laughable" efforts to render him a mere "reformer." "They say he voiced only a return to the original Christian faith. Hus, however, proclaimed nothing of the sort. He tailored the picture of the original church as we compare the good, early bourgeoisie

---

[12]"Naším úkolem zde tedy jest toto konat, tím se řídit, jako on se řídil." Ibid., pg. 27.

[13]"Husův program jest vlastně sociální program novověku, jenž v různých obměnách jest program i všeho dalšího úsilí o pokrok lidstva až dodnes." Ibid., pg. 26.

[14]"Hlasatel ne nového náboženství, ale nového řádu sociálního..." Ibid., pg. 35.

[15]"...organisačního prostředku. ... hospodářská, sociální i politická organisace světa." Ibid., pg. 10.

with the corruption of today."[16]

In fact, however, Nejedlý's Hus followed the same pattern of similarity in difference touched upon in the previous essay — his was a branch that simply extended a little farther from the tree. Nejedlý also closely associated Hus with "Czechness."[17] The "national tradition" was a progressive one and, in keeping with the well established contours of Czech myth, "[n]ot even the post Bilá Hora oppression was able to expell this from the memory and consciousness of the nation, and through this our national revival, even the entire national development of the 19th century, obtained so much of its progressive character."[18] This is all Masaryk; the national revival as a renewal of Hus' Czech path of progress. In this way Hus lived on and was present: "he did not die, he could not die."[19] And, like Masaryk, Nejedlý could also use this pseudo-presence as a means to collapse time, quickly and roughly equating the past and the present, and for

---

[16]The full quote reads: "A je směšné, činí-li se dnes pokus dělat z Husa ne prý revolucionáře, ale reformátora. Prý hlásal jen návrat k prvotnímu křesťanství. Nic však takového Hus nehlasal. Ušival obrazů z první církve pro polemiku s tehdejší církví, jako my srovnáváme dobrou mladou buržoasii s dnešní zkaženou. Ale Hus se nikde nesdával toho, co vytvořila nova doba. To chtěl podržet, ale jinak aby toho bylo užíváno, lépe, ne pro církev, ale pro lid. I bojoval za to i umřel. Dokonalý ne reformátor, ale revolucionář." Ibid., pg. 25.

[17]Again, it should be noted that this was through the medium of the Hussites. This, in no way, detracts from the symbolic power of Hus (yet, though this shift was to come). As with Masaryk Hus still carries the power of generation with him: the Hussites continue Hus' 'task'.

[18]"Ani hrozný útisk pobělohorský nedovedl ji vytlačit z paměti a vědomí národa, a naše národní obrození i celý národní vývoj v 19. století dostaly právě tím tolik příznačný pro ně pokrokový charakter." Ibid., pg. 58.

[19]"...nezemřel, nemohl zemřít" Ibid., pg. 24.

similar political purposes. As Hus had fought in the middle ages against the "unlimited authority" of the church, in the modern age the fight was for, "human liberation from the authority of the church and similar powers — the state, monarchies, the privileged classes."[20] Hus' progress, his task, was theirs. The understanding of progress, however, was 'up for grabs', and Nejedlý realized this, artfully modifying and extending the Hus symbol into his vision of this word.

In the introduction to *Hus a naše doba*'s republication in 1946, Nejedlý was shockingly candid about this — what he and his comrades were up to and why.

> Today we feel especially acutely, that it is necessary to usher the Hus cult, fostered in us for centuries, onto an essentially new path. As the person of Hus himself and his meaning are subject to change, so also is his cult. ... And this is why, just as past eras found their own method of apprehending Hus and his cult, so must we discover this today.[21]

Essentially, Nejedlý was admitting that Hus was such a powerful cultural button that the Communists needed to gain control of it.

---

[20]"...po středověku, s neobmezenou vládou církve, novověk — doba bojů za osvobození člověka z vlády církve i mocností jí podobných, státu, monarchů, privilegovaných tříd." Ibid., pg. 24.

[21]"Dnes jistě zvláště živě cítíme, že Husův kult, u nás od staletí pěstovaný, pod vlivem dnešních poměrů třeba uvést na podstatně nové cesty. Jako Husova osobnost sama a její význam podléhají změnám, tak ovšem i jeho kult. ... A proto jako si minulé doby našly svůj způsob pojímání Husa a jeho kultu, tak musíme si jej nalézt dnes i my." Ibid., pg. 5.

Meeting of minds

Thus in his speech at the "unveilng" of the Hus celebrations in Prague on July 4th, Nejedly tapped into this symbolic power. Today, he said, "we want to have Hus' Czechoslovakia, better than the old Czechoslovakia was."[22] Significantly, Nejedlý had followed an address by the historian (whom I touched upon briefly in the previous chapter) turned politician Kamil Krofta on "The meaning of Hus for the Czech nation today". Unfortunately, it is impossible to know just what Krofta said on this day,[23] but the pairing hints at something very interesting. Krofta was, by now, one of *the* senior statesmen in the realm of Czech history and its popular interpretation as well as a respected political figure who had been imprisoned by the Nazis during the war. This association of Krofta's interpretation of Hus with Nejedly's, I suspect, created the appearance of solidarity regarding the meaning of Hus and, partly through this, lent the later historian's speech a little extra weight.

This may seem rather thin, but I beg some patience. I say this not merely because of my knowledge of Hus through Krofta's eyes, as solidly linked as he was to the idea of progress as well, but because of the Communists' hasty efforts to appropriate Krofta following his death later that year. In 1946 "Svoboda" (the same publishing house that had reprinted Nejedlý's work on Hus) published a collection of Krofta's writings on Czech

---

[22]"...dnes, kdy chceme mít Husovo Československo, lepší než bylo staré Československo." *SS* 5.7.1945.

[23]Krofta's speech is not reported or even substantially paraphrased in *Svobodné Slovo*.

history which they entitled, "The Spiritual Legacy of Hussitism". The introduction to this was written by none other than Zdeněk Nejedlý. Regarding Krofta's Hus Nejedlý offered that, "Krofta demonstrates (most recently in his great work *The Immortal Nation*), how... the seed sown by Hus kept producing and how, even in this modern period of diversity, it is valuable for the blossoming of our national life."[24] By post World War II Czech standards this is actually relatively innocuous, but considered in light of Nejedlý's claims on Krofta's *person* it is loaded. Nejedlý hailed Krofta as "an uncommonly Czech and progressive person", and as a man who was "in everything with the people."[25] Even in the very writing of this introduction, and the fact of the collection's publication,[26] Nejedlý and the Communists were claiming Krofta (and thus his views along with him) as 'one of their own'.[27]

The Communists were not exactly innovators in this regard: the Czechs, by this time,

---

[24]"Krofta... ukazuje (naposled ve velké práci 'Nesmrtelný národ'), jak... semeno zaseté působilo i dále a vryazilo i v tomto období novými větvemi, cennými pro rozkvět našeho národního života." Kamil Krofta, *Duchovní odkaz husitství*, ed. Josef Borovička, Svoboda, Prague, 1946, pp. 5-6. Worthy of note, too, is the fact that the Czech word "semeno" can also be translated as "semen" or "sperm". The connotation of this word thus strongly supports the idea of Hus as a progenitor of modern Czechness as well.

[25]"...vzácně českým a pokrokovým člověkem...", "...ve všem s lidem." Ibid., pp. 7, 6.

[26]Published, in the words of Nejedlý, "so that the work of Kamil Krofta might live on in our people, and even spread still farther, even into the widest strata of our nation." ("...aby dílo Kamila Krofty i dále žilo v našem lidu, ano rozšířilo se ještě více i v nejširších vrstvách našeho národa.") Ibid., pg. 8.

[27]Ingeniously, too, Nejedlý states near the end of his introduction that Krofta died, "with his head still fell of great plans" ("...s hlavou plnou ještě velikých plánů...", Ibid., pg. 8.), looking towards the future and richly implying that Krofta shared a vision of a future that was in harmony with that of the Communists.

had a rich tradition of this sort of appropriation. Even as early as the 1850's and 60's Palacký's history is used as a primary source by other writers (Zap is the most obvious example but also Havliček and Tyl). Masaryk had swallowed and digested all of modern Czech history, reforming it along his lines. This included, crucially, many of the 'awakeners'— Palacký, Šafářik, Havliček, Kollár, etc. These corpses had already become powerful symbols of Czechness themselves and so, in their apprehension, Massaryk *powerfully* reinforced his own views for they were no longer simply the views of a single person, they were the next stage in the progression of *Czech* views; the truth. Publications on Hus around the turn of the century are not uncommonly composed simply or mostly of snippets from the Czech pantheon of awakeners — Palacký, Havliček, Tyl. Again, this is powerful. It is the proper, *Czech* interpretation of their past presented as if it is a harmonious whole.

The Communists indulged in this too, and with gusto. Krofta was not the only victim of such a reddish reincarnation through republication.[28] Jirásek, Tyl, Arnold, Palacký, and

---

[28]Although it is both interesting and significant that the Communists could appropriate him so quickly after his death. This was a much trickier task than appropriating those dead long enough to have moved, safely and surely, past the untidy domain of the real and into the malleable realm of symbolism. Masaryk, to point to the most stellar example, could *not* be so completely appropriated. This was not because of his historical views. In many ways the Communist reinterpretation of the Czech past was (at times even explicitly) built upon Masaryk's foundation of the Czech progressive historical mission, and was, therefore, at least as in line with Masaryk as with Krofta. Nor was it, specifically, Masaryk's connection to, and indeed connotation of, the now bitter memory of the pre-Munich republic, for Krofta, too, had been an important part of this government. The problem was that Massaryk's symbolic meaning was still too thoroughly grounded in the reality of what he had been. Krofta, however, through his postwar activities somehow enabled this rapid transition and lent himself to his posthumous incorporation by the Communists.

others were all churned out complete with introductions and notes by Nejedlý or those of his ilk. Both Tyl's and Jirasek's plays about Hus[29] were even staged by the Czechoslovakian Communist regime.

This did not embrace all notable interpreters of the Czech past, however. One in particular was most decidedly rejected and, I think, we might learn more from this than we do from those whom the Communist succeeded in appropriating. It is mentioned, not infrequently, that what the Czech nation needed after the war was Hus à la Palacký and *not* à la Pekař — indeed this is a sub-theme in the 1945 re-emergence of the Hus symbol. But one article in particular, "The Hus of Palacký and Pekař's Hus" by history professor Jan Slavík, expanded upon and explained this trend. Slavík outlined Pekař's view "in his latest work", a view which "denied" the conception of Hus as the off-ramp to modernity and instead rooted Hus in his context, as a man emerging from his own past. At this point Slavík delivered an atomic weapon of dismissal. "This conception, refuting Hus' meaning in World History," he wrote, "suited the Germans well."[30] Slavík went on to juxtapose the Germans favoring of Pekař (and his views) with their attempts to negate Palacký.[31] These

---

[29]In a somewhat tragic-comic effort to redress at least some of the ethnic hatred of the Germans in which the Communists had bathed immediately after the war the Czechoslovak government even sent a translated production of Tyl's Hus on a tour of Eastern Germany. *These* Germans were, after all, *now* their good, socialist brothers as was made explicit in the Czech Press' coverage of the tour.

[30]"...v posledních svých pracích...", "...popřel...", "Toto pojetí, odmíinající Husovi význam v dějinách světových, se Němcům dobře hodilo." Jan Slavík, "Hus Palackého a Hus Pekařův" *SS* 6.7.1945.

[31]Reminding Czechs that the Nazis had "christened" an embankment in Pekař's name while removing Palacký's name from various streets and bridges. Slavík even went so far as to associate Pekař's understanding of Hus with that of Konstantin Höfler, a by

associations, in the aftermath of World War II, amounted to nothing less than a powerful denunciation of any movement towards a more past-centered view of Hus and his time.

I will not pretend to know much about the inter-war period in Czechoslovakia, but in both my primary research in the postwar period and secondary reading of the years preceding it I have discovered signs hinting at the decline of Hus and indeed of Czech identity as such monolithic entities. Regarding another one of the powerful myths in the Czech nationalist historic consciousness, Josef Petráň and Lydia Petráňová have written of "a small group of 'modern' intellectuals," in the 1920's and 30's, "who regarded the artificially created historical myth (tradition) as a paralyzing ideology where the 'idiotic bleating' about the White Mountain was a poor substitute for necessary political action."[32] Regarding Hus in his article in *Kostnické jiskry* in June of 1945, Souček bluntly stated that "in the pre-Munich era the Hus celebrations were not only held without the official participation of the state, but *increasingly lost their meaning*; you had the impression, that even their organizers... held them more or less only from some sort of feeling of duty."[33]

The second World War was a crucible of common cause for the Czechs. Any decline or fragmentation of the monolithic Czech identity accompanying the formation of new senses

---

now thoroughly discredited Austrian history professor who attempted to challenge Palacký's heroic reinterpretation of Hus and the Hussites in the 1860's. Ibid.

[32]Josef Petráň and Lydia Petráňová, "The White Mountain as a symbol in modern Czech history", pp. 143-163 in *Bohemia in History*, ed. Mikuláš Teich, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pg. 158.

[33]"...v době předmnichovské republiky Husovy oslavy nejen nebyly konány za oficiální účasti státní, nýbrž stále více ztrácely na významu; měli jste dojem, že i jejich pořadatelé... konají je více méně jen z jakéhosi pocitu povinnosti..." *Kostnické jiskry*, r. XXVII (1945), č. 17-18.

or understandings of identity, be they sub-sets of Czechness or substantially non-nationalistic understandings of the self arising out of the inter-war period, was strongly overturned, and indeed reversed, by the shared trauma of the war. Czech identity became absolutely black and white[34] in the immediate aftermath of the war, and the resurgent symbolism of Hus lay at the heart of this.

Hus had long been a uniting symbol of Czechness, at times even bordering on an imperative badge of identity, but in the wake of World War II this was accentuated still further. "Stand as one, and do not let anything divide you!" This exhortation is from Hus' famous "letter to all faithful Czechs" which I referred to in the previous essay. This is one of Hus' quotes that was frequently used by Czech patriots of many different colors through the years, but in July of 1945 it became almost inescapable. Headlines, articles, speeches, the Hus Manifestos — all of these fairly screamed at Czechs, "stand united!"

After the coalescing experiencing of the war, Czechs returned not just to Hus, but to an earlier interpretation of Hus and indeed of their past — an interpretation that, as J. B. Souček said, provided "reinforcement and orientation." There was some range of disagreement as to the content of this reinforcement and orientation that Hus symbolized, to be sure, but *all* agreed[35] that *all* Czechs should "stand as one" with Hus; that there was

---

[34]And the reversal of the 'them against us' dynamic in the post-war expulsion of the Sudeten German population (in which Hus, as a symbol, was made to play a supporting role as well) further buttressed the totality of this in/exclusion.

[35]I was unable to find even one voice arguing for the toleration of multiple interpretations of Hus' meaning. Even those who placed themselves in the most direct opposition to the Socialist reinterpretation of Hus agreed that there could be only one correct interpretation of the martyr of Constance. Ironically their resistance, through this insistence, actually bought into and reinforced the totality of the eventual Communist's

only one true interpretation of him. It was a question of which interpretation would prevail in this all or nothing struggle for the singularity of Czechness.[36]

And the range of disagreement was actually, with a few exceptions, rather narrow. Look, for example, at these words pronounced at Říp and, before looking at the footnote, try to decide who said them, Edvard Beneš or Zdeněk Nejedlý. "The second main effort of Hus' struggle *is* the endeavor for a better social order, it is possible to say for *the kindgom of God on earth*. Even in this sense we want to complete what the Hussite revolution had already begun in our nation as an example of social progress far ahead of this world."[37] These words came from the mouth of President Beneš who spoke between Zdeněk Fierlinger (the then Minister of the Interior) and, after a brief greeting on behalf of the Red army, Nejedlý. Beneš, frankly, was quite in tune with his fellow speakers. One does not have to look hard for this sort of seeming agreement. Indeed, it is almost unavoidable. It can be found even in Christian periodicals of the time.

> We stand before Hus and the Hussite tradition, above all, with our eyes to

---

victory in establishing 'their Hus' as dominant.

[36]As one headline put it, "which truth shall prevail?" ("Která pravda vítězí?") *SS*, 6.7.1945.

[37]"Druha hlavní snaha Husova zápasu *jest* úsílí o lepší sociální řád, možno říci o *království Boží na zemi*. I v tom smyslu chceme dokončiti, co v našem národě již revoluce husitstká začala jako příklad sociálního pokroku tehdejší svět daleko dopředu předstihující." Beneš quoted in *SS* 8.7.1945 (emphasis mine). The use of the present tense, indicating that Hus struggle continues in the present, that it is the *Czech* struggle is noteworthy as is the phrase 'the kingdom of God here on earth'. It was also used by František Rachlík to describe what the 'revolution' was supposed to bring about. See his "Mistr Jan Hus" in *Svět v obrazéch*, roč. I, č. 3, pg. 3.

> the future, towards whose formation we are founding a basis exactly in a period which, by way of its changes in the whole structure of all life, is *analogous* to the era of Hus' life and the celebrated Hussites. ... And in Hus and his pupils we want to see an obliging challenge to form the next life of human kind. The embodiment of this astonishing promise of moral will and purity, which we recognize in Hus and the Hussites is for us an example of the creation of a revolutionary movement by which we are determining our very own times. Hus, as an *eternally living flame*, kindles our religious, national and cultural-social life — it should heat and [encompass] our contemporary politics as well. — If we lift up the social-political meaning of the person and enterprise of Master Jan Hus, we act with the genuine certainty that, were Hus here today, he would stand with us.[38]

This is a view of Hus almost worthy of the Communist party organ *Rovnost* ("Equality"). The author has even played upon, while just falling short of wholly using, the "motto" bestowed "permanently" on the Hus' celebrations by Nejedlý's Ministry of Culture and Education: "Hus — eternally living flame of our revolution."

There is one thread running through the post-war use of Hus, however, that demonstrates this unifying pull towards the left better than anything else. After Krofta's and Nejedlý's speeches on the 4th, *all* those present, including the rector and deans of

---

[38] "Hus a husovská tradice jsou zdrojem pevné jednoty. Nevracíme se však k nim jenom nejslavnějším národním kultem, který pronikl všecek náš lid... Před Husem a husovskou tradicí stojíme zahleděni především do *budoucnosti*, k jejímuž utváření klademe základy právě v době, která svými změnami v celkové struktuře veškerého života je *analogií* době Husova života a husitské slavy. ... A v Husovi a jeho žácích chceme vidět zavazující výzvu k utváření přístího života lidského rodu. Ztělesnění úžasného napětí mravní vůle a čistoty, jež poznáváme na Husovi a husitství, jest pro nás příkladem tvořivého revolučního vzmachu, kterým určujeme svoji současnost. Hus jako *věčně živý plamen* podněcující náš náboženský, národní a kulturně sociální život, má zteplit a zvnitřnit také naši současnost politickou.— Vyzdvihujeme-li sociálně politický význam osobnosti a díla Mistra Jana Husi činime to s opravdovou jistotou o tom, kde a jak by stál dnes mezi námi, kdyby tu s námi byl." From an article entitled "'Stůjte v jednotě a nedejte se ničím na světě rozdělit!' (K významu letošnich Husových oslav)" in *ČZ* r. XXX (1947), č. 27-8 (emphasis mine).

every faculty of Charles University, as well as the post-secondary students in attendance at the Prague Municipal Library, collectively sang the Czech national anthem and read the "Manifesto for Hus' day, 1945."

These Manifestos were eye-popping declarations of what Hus meant to the Czech nation.[39] They were signed on to by an almost unbelievable breadth of cultural, social, political, educational and even religious organizations and institutions.[40] They were published in a variety of the country's major newspapers from their inception in 1945 until

---

[39]And the newspapers publishing these manifestos were explicit about the inescapable totality of this prescribed meaning from those 'above'.

[40]The following is a *complete* list of those who joined in issuing the Hus Manifesto in 1949 as listed in *Lidové noviny*, 3.7.1949: Charles University, the Czech Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Czech Post-Secondary Technical Education Institutes in Prague and Bratislava, Massaryk University in Brno, Palacký University in Olomouc, the Post-Secondary Political and Social School in Prague, the Post-Secondary Mining School in Ostrava, the Academy of Graphic Arts in Prague, the Post-Secondary School of Industrial Arts in Prague, the Academy of Musical Arts in Prague, the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Bratislava, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, the Czechoslovak Church, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, The Socialist Party of Czechoslovakia, the Central Union Council, the League of Fighters for Freedom, the Czechoslovak Community of Sokols, the Union of Czech Brethren, the Constance Association, the Chelčický Union of Brethren, the Czech Orthodox Church, the head office of the Evangelical Methodist Church, the Religious Community of Czechoslovak Unitarians, the Czechoslovak Youth Federation, the United Federation of Czech Agriculturalists, the Council of Czechoslovak Women, the Federation of Nondenominational Citizens, the Slavic Committee in Prague, Massaryk's Institute of People's Education, the Federation of Czechoslovak Writers, the Federation of Czechoslovak Composers, The Czechoslovak Federation of Graphic Artists, the Federation of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, the Socialist Academy, the Liberation Memorial, the Czech Anti-Fascist Society, the Federation of Czechoslovak Firefighters, the Czechoslovak Red Cross, and the Municipal organizations in: Praha, Tábor, Hradec Králové, Žatec, Louny, Slaný, Jaroměř, Litoměřice, Dvůr Králové, Trutnov, Vysoké Mýto, Časlav, Kutná Hora, Kolín, Nymburk, Kouřím, Český Brod, Beroun, Písek, Vodňany, Sušice, Prachatice, Klatovy, and Domažlice. The lists of organizations signing on to the 'Hus Manifestos' in 1945 and 1948 are similar.

their mysterious disappearance in 1950. They included statements such as the following:

> And so even today Master Jan Hus manifests himself to us as a forerunner and a trailblazer, as a still living example compelling us further and higher in an unending endeavor to deepen and actualize our life, to a responsible attainment of our socialism. And if we have started down the path to resolute socialism in bond, in fraternal association with the other Slavic nations, we are also obliged to share, and by our own example translate, Hus' legacy with and to them.[41]

These manifestos demonstrate quite clearly that the Communists had rather quickly won the battle for the reigning sybolism of Hus, but how?

Perfect Day[42]

In part the Communists were simply reaping the rich harvest of all of the symbolic meaning sown into Hus over the years. Thus, in some respects, they revived and re-emphasized auxiliary pieces of Hus that had been long slumbering, though still accompanying, elements of the symbol through its winding path of reinterpretation, while in others they simply extended the dominant core of meaning deeply infused in Hus and,

---

[41]"A tak i dnes se nám jeví Mistr Jan jako předchůdce a průbojník, jako příklad stále živý, nutící dál a výš k neustálému úsilí po prohloubení a zopravdovění našeho života, k odpovědnému pojímání našeho socialismu. A jestliže jsme nastoupili cestu rozhodného socialismu v závazném, družném bratrství s ostanímí národy slovanskými, i jim jsme povinni živě sdělit a svým příkladem tlumočit odkaz Husův." *Kostnické jiskry* r. 33 (1948), č. 27-28.

[42]A 'love song' by Lou Reed that is almost suspiciously (if we consider its composer) romantic and happy until it ends with the singer, still in idyllic voice, warning over and over, "you're gonna reap just what you sow."

clearly, in the Czech mentalité as well. But, for their purposes, the Communists also found themselves in a paradise of timing. They skillfully capitalized upon the atmosphere prevalent in postwar Czechoslovakia, wedding it to their reinterpretation of Hus to reforge the established symbol into a very powerful, indeed gravitational, cultural button of their own.

Hus' seat in the soul of Czechness enabled a collapsing of time. "[T]he spirit of Hus bridges the chasm of the ages... as a collective program of the greatest sons and daughters of our homeland,"[43] is how the Manifesto or 1945 succinctly phrased this dynamic. This is where the understanding of Hus and his period as "analogous" (as *Kostnické jiskry* made explicit. See above.) to an idealized Czech present, and therefore actually to the desired Czech future, came strongly into play. For in emphasizing many of the long established linkages in the symbol of Hus harmonious with the Communist program — lid, pan-slavism and his connection to the Hussites, to name the three most prominent examples — the Communists were utilizing the power of this understood analogy to help appropriate Hus by identifying themselves more firmly with him. They were surrounding the fort they intended to conquer, if you will.

Hus' abiding and deep connection with the Czech *lid* had long been a foundational element of his symbolic cultural value. Hus' rural, peasant background, his early days as a student when he was (according to the oft repeated anecdote) so poor that he had to eat his pea soup with a consumable 'spoon' of bread are touch stones of most retellings of

---

[43]"...duch Husův spojuje přes propast věků... jako společýn program nejlepších synů a dcer naší vlasti." *SS* 6.7.1945.

Hus' tale. And this fit well with the abstraction of 'the people' that had long served an important role in the Czech historical mentalité. The lid were the 'keepers of the Czech flame'. After the tragic defeat of 'the nation' at Bilá Hora, the subsequent germanization of the nobility in Bohemia and the virtual elimination of Czech as a literate language, it was the Czech peasantry that had kept the language 'alive', at least in spoken form, during the "temno,"[44] until the Czech awakeners were able to 'revive' it.[45]

But this was about more than language choice. Given the centrality of language, especially amongst earlier awakeners, the keepers of the Czech language had been the keepers of Czechness as well and so perhaps it was only a logical continuance to extend the role of the guardian into other critical spheres of this identity as well. This was certainly the case with 'Hus' legacy'. Again — and we can look at Massaryk or Krofta or Nejedlý or a host of others — it was the Czech people that kept the flame of Hus secretly alive until the cavalry of the National revival could arrive to once more lift high this task, this burden, of Czechness.[46]

---

[44]"The darkness"— a term used in the Czech mythological view of their history to signify the post-Bilá Hora, pre-National revival period.

[45]I put many of the words in this paragraph in singular quotation marks merely to indicate that they are based on the more nationalistic/mythological view of the Czech past and thus highly problematic. To take one example, the linguistic 'revival' really might be better named a re-construction. Literary Czech, having lain dormant for almost two centuries, was in need of some extensive modification — including the invention of many new words and the importation of others from languages such as Russian and Polish (to name two of the most prominent sources) as well.

[46]These abstract elements — Hus, language, the people — mesh together almost perfectly in their mutual reinforcement. Hus' connection with the people is deepened through his origins and through his contributions to the Czech language, as is the connection of the people, in preserving the language and Hus' legacy, with Hus. This is a

But the *lid* (people), through its crucial role, had thus been wedded to the concept of Czechness as well. Moreover, since it had been the rural peasantry, the simple, poor country folk, who preserved the Czech heritage we have the paradox that, in a nation that also highly valued education and intelligence — indeed, a nation that saw these characteristics, too, as aspects of its true national character — the more *lidový* ("folksy") something or someone was understood to be, the more truly Czech it (he or she) was as well.

This is why the Communists magnified still further the connection of Hus with the people, especially with the 'simple' folk.[47] This deep seated understanding of the simple folk as the true bearers of Czechness meshed almost perfectly with the Communist claims to be representing the downtrodden, to be "the will and voice of the people."[48] Having a Hus from, with and for the people thus paralleled the claims of the Communist hierarchy, further associating them with Hus.

The Hussites too had long been intimately connected with Hus. The debate in the Czech diet regarding the suggestion to include Hus' name amongst the 'beplaqued' pantheon adorning the National Museum and the reflexive connection of Hus, the Hussites and the

---

feedback loop in which the Czechness of both Hus and the people is amplified.

[47]This is almost an obligatory component of the Socialist interpretation of Hus. One of the best examples, however is found in the 1948 'Hus' Manifesto'. "[Hus] came from the simple people, he spoke to the people in Bethlehem chapel... He allowed the people to sing in Czech in church, he went amongst the rural people inflamed by God's truth... " *Kostnické jiskry*, r. XXXIII, č. 27-8.

[48]"...vůle a hlas lidu." Klement Gottwald, "Projev na manifestaci Pražského lidu na Václavském náměstí v Praze 25. února 1948" in *Spisy Klementa Gottwalda*, vol. XIV, Prague, Svoboda, 1950, pg. 274.

Czech nation comes to mind. The Hussites had generally been seen as issuing forth from Hus, as somehow being a continuation of him. The Hussites had been the bearers of Hus' legacy. The Communists often merely accentuated this in their historical view, but they also extended it. Nejedlý spoke of Hus, Žižka and the zealous preacher Jan Želivský as practically synonymous.[49] Indeed in some cases they even began to substantially transfer the Czech legacy onto the Hussites, and especially the Táborites.[50] And this increased association, this blurring of boundaries, also helped to push the meaning of Hus towards the left.

Lastly, the Communists made use of the power of the analogy by playing upon the pan-slavism long seen in Hus and his time. Of the tangential elements included in Hus, this had always been one that required the greatest suspension of disbelief. Hus had not provided much ammunition in this department. Instead the pan-slavism of people and events around him — the other Slavic nations standing with the Czechs during the debate preceding the Kutná Hora decree, Jerome's trip through other Slavic nations, the battle at Grunwald between Poles and Germans at which Žižka and other Czechs had been present in support of their Slav brothers — had been highlighted in the course of Hus' story. The analogy still came into play, however: if Hus and the Hussites were pan-slavists, then the Czechs

---

[49]See *Lidové Noviny*, 20.10.1949.

[50]In an article entitled "Master Jan Hus" immediately after the war František Rachlík saw fit to include the following. "The Hussitism of Tábor in our history and in our life remains the greatest and most beautiful stage and glowing example, in whose light we must step so as not to betray the purpose of our own national life."[sic]"Táborské husitství v našich dějinách a v našim životě zůstane nejvěští a nejkrasnější etapou a zářným příkladem, v jehož světle musíme kráčet, abychom nezradili smysl našeho národního života." *Svět v obrazech*, r. 1 (1945), č. 3 (6.7.), pg. 3.

should be as well.

And the eventual focus of this pan-slavism — the Russians — was as predictable as smoke from a burning pyre. The Slavic bond between the Czechs and the Russians was constantly being praised and highlighted in the period following their liberation. All that remained was to extend this bond into the past. "Today, then, the peak — and not at all only an attempt at rebuilding the world in [Hus'] spirit, but its realization — is the Russian Revolution," Nejedlý had written, "and precisely because the Soviet Union emerged from this along its own, new pathway, it is a more beautiful realization of Hus' thought of a new order for the good of all."[51] The Communist revolution of their Russian brothers was painted as progressive and in line with the spirit of Hus' legacy. And the context of having been liberated, largely, by their Slavic brothers fed into this perfectly. *This* was the road of progress, the path to the future.

For in the aftermath of World War II, the Czechs were ready for change, even radical change. The old ways, the old order had been discredited by what Czechs perceived as the betrayal of Munich. "[W]é do not want to go astray on a crooked path leading to humiliation, to slavery and decline." Josef Cvrček wrote in obvious reference to the "path" that had led to Munich. "The West" had been tainted by this betrayal, and the Communists were not about to let the country forget it.[52]

---

[51]"Dnes pak jako vrchol, a nikoli již jen pokus o předbudování světa [i.e. modernity] v tomto duchu, ale jeho uskutečnění, je to ruská revoluce a z ní vyrostlý Sovětsky svaz, svou novou cestou, ale právě proto tím krásnější uskutečňující Husovu myšlenku nového řádu, dobrého všem." Nejedlý, *Hus a naše doba*, pg. 49.

[52]Klement Gottwald continually belabored this point. For example during his speech at the swearing in of the new government on February 27th, 1948 he stated: "Those

Czechs turned away from this. As the Hus Manifesto of 1945 put it: "Upon the wreckage of the old order, [ours shall be] the endeavor to incapacitate age-old injustices and to found a new, lasting community on the firm foundations of fairness."[53] I would even go so far as to say that there seemed to be a sense of idealism in the air. There were continued references to the building of something new, of a "better future." The Communists played into this trend but did it one better, for the future which they envisioned was a "beautiful" and "happy" one.[54]

It was a future, moreover, that was inherent in the character of the Czech soul, a soul that Hus had inculcated with the values of love for one's fellow man, equality, solidarity, a willingness to sacrifice for the greater good. These are the familiar components of Hus' moral, humanist legacy to his nation and they fit quite well, with a bit of tweaking here and there, with the ideals of Communism.

One might even say that the Communists consumed all of Hus — nationalist, humanist,

---

who have Munich on their conscience, those who bantered with Hitler's Germany over our skin, and quite simply undemocratically and illegally tore up their friendly and collective treaty with us shall most certainly not give us lessons on democracy and institutionalism!" ("Nikoliv, nebudou nám dávat lekce z demokracie a ústavnosti ti, kdož mají na svědomí Mnichov, ti, kdož se paktovali o naši kůži s hitlerovským Německem a naprosto nedemokraticky a protiprávně roztrhali spojeneckou a přátelskou smlouvu s námi!") Klement Gottwald, *Spisy Klementa Gottwalda*, vol. XIV, Prague, Svoboda, 1950, pg. 276.

[53]"Na troskách starého řád, usilující o to, znemožniti navždy dávné křivdy a založiti novou splecnost trvale na pevných základech spravedlnosti." Manifesto *SS* 6.7.1945.

[54]For mention of a beautiful future please see, for example, Fierlinger's speech at Říp in 1945 (*SS* 8.7.1945) or Nejedlý's speech to Czechoslavak youth of the same year (*MF* 6.7.1945) Edvard Vaněček refers to the "[s]truggle for a happier age" ("Zápas za šťasněšjí svět") in *Svobodné Československo* 5.7.1946.

spiritual and even religious — digesting and excreting their version of him back into Czech culture.

> In the intellectual and moral content of Hus' work, whose legacy presses on to a new responsibility of thought, experience, [and] the realization of the responsibility of human to human before the face of God, there are delivered such powerful stimuli and premises for the actual liberation of humanity. People, not as a robot-like mass, but with every individual burning for truth, for justice, for real progress of humanity in solidarity with every soldier of freedom in the whole world — thus Masaryk translated the legacy of Hus to the nation and called the [Czech] people to heights worthy of the martyr of Constance.[55]

As the above quote suggests, the Communists *could* do this: the materials of memory[56] supplied by previous interpretations of Hus lent themselves well to this consumption and digestion. The affinity of humanist ideals and Communism as an abstraction is fairly obvious, but I was (perhaps naively) surprised to see how the Communists could thus take many of the fundamentally religious aspects[57] of Hus — his love of his fellow man, his care for the downtrodden, even his devaluing of the material world — and fit these into

---

[55]"V myšlenkový a mravní obsah Husova díla, jehož odkaz nutí k novému odpovědnému pro myšlení, prožívání, uskutečňování závazků člověka k člověku před tváří Boží a dává tak mocné podněty a předpoklady pro skutečnou svobodu lidu. Lid ne jako masa robotného lidu, ale v každém jednici zapálený pro pravdu, pro spravedlnost, pro skutečný pokrok lidstva v solidaritě všech pravých bojovníků svobody na celém světě — tak tlumočil Masaryk odkaz Husův národu a volal lid na úroveň hodnou jména kostnického mučedníka." "Manifest k Husovým oslavám v roce 1948" *Kostnické jiskry* r. 33 (1948), č. 27-28.

[56]This wording is borrowed from Derek Sayer's *The Coasts of Bohemia*. See pp. 29-52

[57]Indeed, as previously touched upon, even those writing in religious periodicals saw and utilized the contemporary social relevance of Hus' Christianity during this time.

their version of Hus with relative ease. They could even present Socialism as the realization of "the Kingdom of God."

And *all* of this was groundwork for the real prize — laying claim to Hus' legacy.

> If, therefore, we understand the appearance of Hus in his time, his meaning in the history of the nation, then we Communists can be the true inheritors and guardians of his legacy: We live in a different era than Hus... The conditions have changed, but the direction of Hus' vision points forward even today: Hus would be with us everywhere that the battle is waged for truth, right, justice and human freedom. ... It is no accident that the main thoughts of Communist politicians — the identity of people and nation, the cultural elevation of the nation, the creation of a people's democratic order, the removal of all surviving privileges, the unity of the nation in the building of a better life — sound so close to that for which the following pupils of Hus fought. And this is why we Communists shall be more faithful to, and better guardians of, Hus' legacy in our people as the greatest moral strength in our past and future history.[58]

The Communists presented their vision of the future as the next (and indeed final) stage in Czech progress; as the completion, or realization, of Hus' legacy. Forward, to a happier future.

---

[58]"Rozumíme-li tedy smyslu Husova vystoupení v jeho době, jeho významu v dějinách národa, můžeme my, komunisté, být pravými dědici a strážci jeho odkazu: Žijeme v jiné době než Hus, s jiným sociálním řádem a jinou kulturní atmosférou. Poměry se změnily, ale směr Husova pohledu ukazuje i dnes kupředu: Hus by dnes byl s námi všude tam, kde se pracuje i bojuje o pravdu, právo, spravedlnost a svobodu člověka. ... Není náhodné, že hlavní myšlenky komunistické politiky — totožnost lidu a národa, kulturní povznesení národa, vytvoření lidově demokratických řádů, odstranění všech přežitých výsad, jednota národa v budování lepšího života — zní tak blízce tomu, zač bojovali důslední žáci Husovi. Proto my, komunisté, budeme tím věrnější Husovu odkazu a budeme tím více střežit význam husitské tradice v našem lidu, jako největší mravní síly našich minulých i budoucích dějin." *Rovnost* 5.7.1946.

Conclusion

It has often seemed to me that Czechs who lived through this time find it rather difficult to accept that it really happened. But this is what happened: "in February 1948 the Communists took power not in bloodshed and violence, but to the cheers of about half the population. And please note: the half that cheered was more dynamic, the more intelligent, the better half."[59] I would add that this was the more idealistic half , influenced at least in part by their belief in the symbolism of Hus, progress and the Czech mission.

---

[59]Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, transl. by Michael Henry Heim, Penguin Books, Hammondsworth, England, 1981, pg. 8.

Personal Reflections

As this part of the thesis more than any other is destined, in all probability, to be read only by myself, the members of my committee and, perhaps, a small handful of dedicated friends and familly, and as I have also had the good fortune of both coming to know three quarters of my committee members on a professional level and being influenced by them in a variety of different ways over the course of this project, I wanted to grasp the opportunity provided by this 'conclusion' to drop any pretense of objectivity and engage the intended readers personally, though still (I hope) intellectually, with my current reflections upon this three year journey in my thinking. After all, this is what this particular conclusion *really* is no matter how I might try to disguise it.

In the course of this reflection/engagement I shall feel free to paraphrase my recollection of things that the three of you and others have said. I shall try to be as faithful to my memory as I can, and I hope that the inevitable warping of these thoughts caused both by their transfer into language as well as my own interpretation shall not offend too greatly. Lastly, although I do not know the fourth, "external" member of this committee, I should think that the somewhat different approach to this final chapter should add some extra 'verve' to your role in this as well. You have been "external" to this journey, but being so placed explicitly 'outside' is also your empowerment. Thus I, and I hope your fellow committee members as well, look forward to some fresh insights from you upon these thoughts.

It is almost without fail, as if I am witnessing some sort of great reflex of the Western

Canadian mentalité leaping into action, that any new acquaintance, upon learning that I am studying for my M.A. in history, responds with the question:

"What are you going to do with that?"

In fact this is the same question, although (and perhaps it is only that I wish to hear it) with an ever-so-slightly greater note of respectful perplexity for the fact that it is a graduate degree, that I used to hear upon informing people that I was studying for my B.A. in history. Ah, if I only had a nickel...

It is an annoyingly and yet wonderfully Albertan question: what, it really asks, is the utility of historical knowledge? Perhaps even the word "utility" does not quite encompass the meaning fairly. What "good" is historical knowledge to the culture that fosters and values it? This is more than just a valid question. It is a very important one, and the fact that I have never been able to come up with a terribly satisfactory (either to me or to my interlocutors) answer to this question, as I think three of the four of you well know, is what truly drove me to continue my academic study of history.

For, poised as I am to exit the Ivory Tower once again and take my place in a world that asks such impertinent questions, I find my mind frequently returning to its consideration. Dr. Gow (in particular) and I have had many animated and, I think, provocative discussions about this question. Yet, frankly, I have never found his arguments in favor of history to be terribly convincing. If it is any consolation, Dr. Gow, I feel as if I have yet to hear *any* truly persuasive proposition addressing the benefits of

historical knowledge, so perhaps I am just extremely stubborn (and a bit 'thick') regarding this subject.

A colleague of mine working towards her PhD in history once remarked to me that she felt as if history was of no use whatsoever -that it was merely an intellectual game played for professional and egotistical advancement. I strongly suspect that this was a passing phase of cynicism brought on by the pressures of a very difficult phase in her program, and yet I found it surprising and refreshing. For most historians and students of history either avoid the question of history's utility by responding that they study history merely for their own interest and personal growth,[1] or they respond in the fashion of a 'true believer'. I label (perhaps somewhat unfairly) 'true believers' those that are absolutely convinced of the benefit of historical knowledge yet simultaneously unable to convincingly articulate the why behind this. The worst of these 'true believers' dismisses what I call the Albertan question out of hand as if the answer were either so obvious that I must be a fool to have asked the question in the first place, or so complex and elusive as to defy any effort at simple articulation. Either of these objections might well be true, but when faced with this sort of reaction I inevitably find myself wishing that the person so questioned had at least attempted an explanation, which, of course, is what the best of the 'true believers' do.

But, as I have already stated, I have found these attempted explanations unsatisfying. They are usually vague: they sound like a memorized catechism that makes sense to those within the faith but fails to convince any agnostics in the crowd. The reason for this, I

---

[1]I find the implied suggestion herein that the study of history provides for greater/better personal growth, skill learning and honing than other avenues of life problematic.

think, is that most historians and students of history do not confront this question *honestly*: genuinely and consistently including the possibility in their thinking that, just perhaps (as my friend once maintained), historical knowledge is useless and trivial.

And I confess that this thesis, though I have endeavored to research it thoroughly, has really been a vehicle by which I have explored this 'Albertan' question. For in my earlier stay in Prague, before I started this degree, I was struck by the *presence* of Czech history. Here was a place where history was clearly thought to be important. (I cannot, for example, recall a single instance of a Czech person asking me what the utility of a graduate degree in history might be.) Here was a place where history had been utilized. "How?", I wondered.

I began my Master's degree thinking along lines that, really, were quite similar to those followed by Tomaš Garrigue Masaryk. The past, I was convinced, must be *made* useful. We must excavate the meaning that we need from it today, otherwise it is truly dead and useless. Dr. Himka was witness to this phase in my thinking. I remember him suggesting, with a chuckle and a good deal of patience, that what I wanted was for historians to be "witch doctors." I have since come to suspect that Dr. Himka knew then how homeopathic the treatment of Czech history would prove upon my, at the time, acutely present-centered historiographical condition.

Indeed, as I reflect upon the topic I explored both in my research and in its attempted distillation which you have just read I cannot help but think that it is entirely too obvious, too tempting, to draw conclusions practically in the form of fable from this sampling of Czech cultural history along these lines.

Mr. Chodan: Now class, what is the moral of the thesis?

Class: Not to be so present-centered when we look at the past, Mr. Chodan!

Mr. Chodan: Very good, class!

On the other hand, as with most morals and clichés, I think that much of this is quite 'true'.

I remember Dr. Sayer once, in this year's seminar on Prague, stating that national identities were as "real" as the Tory building was. In many ways I think his point is quite true. Our belief in these national identities does make them into very impressive, "real" historical forces. The shared *belief* in Hus, in what he meant, was a very real force for decades in Czech culture. My research has convinced me of that and yet it has also convinced me as to the limits of Dr. Sayer's analogy for, in the end, the Czechs were not so innately humanitarian or progressive that they were able to build 'the kingdom of God here on earth', regardless of how much they may have believed these qualities to be true of themselves. In this case the Czech identity turned out to be a mirage; a building that became a house of cards, collapsing under the weight of 'reality' when the Czechs attempted to stand, and build, upon it.

The Czechs had built a conception of themselves strongly rooted in their history. The problem was that their history became increasingly disconnected from 'their' past. I am not suggesting that the past can be fully understood 'as it was'— this is a destination of understanding that can never be completely reached. The Czechs made precious little attempt to reach it however. With a few noted exceptions the Czechs in the periods I

studied were unabashedly present-centered in viewing 'their' past. This trend bore its fruit as illusions were built upon illusions, and the popular historical understanding moved ever farther away from whatever the reality of Hus, to cite the example explored in this thesis, as a man living in the late middle ages may have been.

This would not have been a problem except for the tremendous weight that the words "the past" carry with them. I think that most people make little distinction between the past and history. History is, for most, very Rankean — it is 'what actually happened', synonymous with the past. Therefore history quite widely connotes *truth*. This is accentuated in a culture such as that of the Czechs which has invested so much of itself in its past, but it is not limited to such cultures. Even in this land of unhistory, Western Canada, history as a truth still has some currency.[2]

The point is that our understanding of history plays quite an important role in the construction of the lenses by which we perceive and understand the world around us and our place in it, and this understanding is in turn the mental foundation upon which we act.

---

[2] The continued use of Hitler as a 'cultural button' is an obvious example but more interesting in this case, I think, is the power that *cyclical* history — a return to a better, 'original' state — still holds in Western Canada. Those with conservative political agendas, for example, can quickly conjure up an idyllic picture of the past with 'better', 'stronger' 'family' values, and a more prevalent influence of Christianity, etc., arguing for a return to this mythical past and the argument instantly carries substantial weight with many by virtue of its association with the past, with truth, and an imagining of something fundamental about how we are and should be. The First Nations are another example of this. They can claim (though, of course, not all do) to be returning to their 'roots' and it does not really matter that these roots are often substantially a present day creation based upon evidence remaining from that past, true, but also upon the imagination and the desire of those who have built and are building the conception of that 'past' to which they seek to 'return'. And, despite the undeniable racism towards North American Indians in Western Canada as a whole, these claims carry quite a bit of political weight.

Our lenses are necessarily faulty, we necessarily build a highly imperfect foundation, but when we willingly accentuate this distortion by disregarding the 'otherness' of the past, positing/plundering what we need from it today, we increase the potential for mischief and even tragedy. The mischief is supplied by the highly abstract, vague and thus malleable cultural buttons and levers that such a history provides for those with political ambitions to play with, the potential tragedy when the very real effects of this manipulation manouevres entire peoples into an attempt, in effect, to stand upon the illusions that they have come to believe.[3]

It was not far into my research when I realized that the Czech case provided an example of how history should *not* be useful to the present. The above is my attempt at a less 'fabulous' explanation of why — of the pitfall of present-centered history. The experience has also made me much more aware of how present-centered historical 'buttons' are still manipulated today in my own culture and, in a wider sense, the prison of our culturally composed world views. But is this the best that history can do — show us its own pitfalls, and how it should not be used? For if this is the case, then perhaps the Albertan questioning of the value of history is on the right track.

I was beginning to suspect this, actually, until a few weeks ago when I heard an

---

[3]Though this never need be the case. A woman who believes she can fly from the tops of mountains need never end her life prematurely if she spends her entire life in Saskatchewan. The Canadian *belief* that *we* are somehow an especially humanitarian, welcoming, peaceful, etc. people need never lead us into tragedy either. The belief in the fiction perhaps, in some ways, bring reality a little closer to the fiction. It might even provide a little dark humor now and then. The fiction, however, remains what it is and carries within it the seed of potential disaster if the fiction is depended upon as real/true in the wrong context.

interview with the Dutch Professor (emeritus, I believe) of Law[4] Herman Bianci on the CBC. Bianci had been deeply troubled by the contemporary Western judicial system. In his opinion punishing the offender by placing him or her in prison for their crime brought "justice" to no one. So Bianci decided to examine the human past to see both how human cultures other than our own had once coped with the problem of crime and how out of these our current practice and conception of justice had been produced.

To simplify drastically, he found that in the past justice had generally been a form of reconciliation, and not punishment. The criminal, often through mediation, tried to provide some form of mutually agreed upon compensation to those he had harmed and in this way brought a genuine sense of redress to his victims and/or the relatives of his victims. On the criminal's part it forced him to confront and accept the wrongness of his actions in the process of atonement. Both parties were granted release from the wrong by attempting to 'right' it, not by punishing it with another 'wrong' as we do today, and in this way there took place a healing of that wrong not just between the parties directly involved but within the larger community as a whole.

This crystalized, for me, the thoughts that I now believe had been lurking in the back of my mind for months as the necessary antithesis of my conviction of the wrongness of present-centered history. The human past, especially in our present era when cultural distinctions seem to be losing ground under the pressures of our ravenous appetite to attain ever greater heights of modernity, is a bit like the tropical rainforest of human

---

[4]Amongst other things. Mr. Bianci also seemed to have a solid grounding in theology, history, and linguistics. According to the radio documentary he has given up academia and currently works as an artist and a poet.

experience. It provides some record — incomplete, impossible to completely understand, but a record nevertheless — of the diversity of how humans have lived together in groups through time.

The key here is the diversity, the *difference*. And just as biological diversity is valuable for its otherness, for the fact that it is not as we are and thus a source of *new* knowledge from outside of us that we might beneficially reflect back upon ourselves, so too is human cultural diversity. It provides more than simply the knowledge that things need not necessarily be as they are today, but the knowledge, the example from which we might learn, of how *we* as communities *were* once different. We are then free to compare and contrast these different ways with our own, providing a wider range of options for our present and future than before. This, I think, is a tremendously valuable resource and a very convincing way in which history can be 'useful' to us in the present

And it hints at the broadest possible sense in which, I suspect, present-centered history cheats us. It is not simply the damage it does by providing a distorted picture of our past, it is the knowledge of which we are denied even the potential of utilizing because we do not have a more accurate picture of that past. Dr. Himka is currently engaged in a project along these lines — in a very broad sense attempting to recover the difference of the past by looking at that past through as faithful a construction of its own perceptual lenses as he can construct. Who knows what this might recover, but its potential is exciting.

And this, I find, is as close as I can bring my reflections on this topic to any sort of conclusion. For, to be honest, my thoughts are not nearly the neat and tidy package that I have endeavored to present in the above. I have many doubts and further lines of inquiry

regarding this conclusion. Why, to mention only the most glaring example, does my conclusion (present-centered history — bad, past-centered history — good)— and this despite my best efforts — still smack suspiciously of a fable? Doubts and problems such as these will, I trust, motivate me to continue my exploration of the Albertan question in the future as I move past this attempted, partial snapshot of my thinking on the topic at present.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Unpublished Sources

The National Literary Archive (Strahov):

Personal correspondence of Josef Václav Frič.
Personal correspondence of Karel Sabina.

Periodicals

Čas
Čech
Český Zápas
Hlas osvobozených
Katolické Listy
Kostnické jiskry
Lidové noviny
Mladá Fronta
Národní Listy
Rovnost
Svět v obrazéch
Svoboda: politický časopis
Svobodné Československo
Svobodné slovo
Zlatá Praha

Books and articles

Arnold, Emanuel. *Emanuel Arnold Sebrané spisy.* ed. Dr. Václav Osvald. Prague. Státní Nakladatelství Politické Literatury. 1954.

Beneš, Edvard. "Hus a sociální problémy dneška." *Husův památník: slavnostní list k 6. Červenci 1913.* ed. Dr. Fr. Loskot. Prague. Volné myšlenky. 1913.

Čapek, Karel. *President Masaryk tells his story, recounted by Karel Čapek.* New York. Putnum. 1935.

Gottwald, Klement. *Spisy Klementa Gottwalda.* Vols. XIII-XV. Prague. Svoboda. 1950.

Hanuš, J. "M. Jan Hus a husitství za pobělohorské protireformace." *Mistr Jan Hus v*

životě a pamatkách českého lidu. Prague. Českého čtenáře. 1915.

Havliček-Borovský, Karel. "Mistr Jan Hus" *Naše Knihovna*. Vol. II. ed. Frant. S. Frabša. Kladno. Antonin Švejnara 1904.

Helfert, Josef Alex. *Mistr Jan Hus aneb Počátkové Církevního Rozdvojení v Čechách*. Prague. Nákladem Musea Království Českého. 1857.

Jirásek, Alois. *Jan Hus: Historická hra o pěti dějstvích*. Prague. Osvěta. 1951.

Krofta, Kamil. *Mistr Jan Hus*. 3rd ed. Prague. Akciové tiskárny. 1913.

———— "M. Jan Hus a jeho význam v českých dějinách do Bilé Hory." *Mistr Jan Hus v životě a pamatkách českého lidu*. Prague. Českého čtenáře. 1915.

———— *Duchovní odkaz husitství*. ed. Josef Borovička. Prague. Svoboda. 1946.

Kunětická, Božena Viková. *Švýcarské scenerie*. Prague. F. Šimáček. 1902.

Lenz, Antonín. "Učení Husovo a církev pravoslavná." *Časopis pro Katolické ducovenstvo*. r. XIX, č.7 (1869).

———— *Apologie sněmu kostnického*. Prague. Cyrillo-Methodějské knihkupetctví. 1896.

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. *Ideály Humanitní*. 9th ed. Prague. Čin. 1946.

———— *V boji o náboženství*. 3rd ed. Prague. *Čin*. 1947.

———— *Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk*. ed. Milan Machovec. Prague. Melantrich. 1968.

———— *The Meaning of Czech History*, ed. and transl. by Rene Welch. Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina Press. 1974.

———— *Jan Hus: naše obrození a naše reformace*. Prague. Jan Kanzelsberger. 1990.

Nejedlý, Zdeněk. *Hus a naše doba*. Prague. Svoboda. 1947.

Neumann, Pant. *Stručný Dějepis Český*. Prague. Náklad Jaroslav Pospíšil. 1866.

Novotný, Novotný. *Mistr Jan Hus v historii a ve veřejném své doby*. Prague. Melantrich. 1915.

Palacký, František. *Dějiny Národu Českého v Čechách a v Moravě*. Vols. I-VI. Prague. Bursík & Kohout. 1893.

———— "Dějiny husitismu a prof. Konst. Höfler." *Časopis Českého Musea*. r. XXIV. č. 3 (1868).

Pekař, Josef. *Jan Hus*. Prague. Národní Sociální Dělnictva. 1907.

Rieger, Dr. Fr. L., ed. *Čechy, země i národ*. Prague. I. L. Kober. 1863.

[Riegerův] Slovník naučný, vol. III, Kober, Prague, 1860-1874.

Šaloun, Ladislav. *Dva návrhy na pomník M. Jana Husi v Praze*. Prague. Manes. 1903.

———— "1915." *Husův památník: slavnostní list k 6. Červenci 1913*.

Skalický, F. R. *Oslava Husova*. 2nd ed. Hradec Králové. Biskupská Knihtiskárna. 1900.

Tomek, Václav Vladivoj. *Děje university Pražské*. Prague. Tiskem knížecí arcibiskupské knihtiskárny. 1849.

———— *Děje království českého*. 6th ed. Prague. Nákladem Knihkupectví Fr. Řivnáče. 1891.

Tyl, Josef Kajetán. "Jan Hus: Dramatická báseň v pěti odděleních." *Spisy Josefa Kajetána Tyla*, vol. XX. ed. Antonin Grund. Prague. Knihovna Klasiků. 1954.

Uhlíř, Antonín. "Husova Pravda a Národ" *Husův památník: slavnostní list k 6. Červenci 1913*.

Zap, Karel Vladislav. *Vypsání husitské války*. Prague. Nákladem kněhkupectví: I. L. Kober. 1866.

Secondary Sources

Agnew, Hugh LeCaine. *Origins of the Czech national renascence*. Pittsburgh. University of Pittsburgh Press. 1993.

Butterfield, Herbert. *The Whig Interpretation of History*. New York. W. W. Norton & Company. 1965.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History*. transl. Willard

R. Trask. New Jersey. Princeton University Press. 1991.

Engels, Frederick. "Democratic Pan-Slavism I-II." *The Revolutions of 1848*. ed. David Fernbach. New York. Random House. 1973.

Engels, Fererick and Marx, Karl. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Peking. Foreign Language Press. 1975.

Gurevich, Aaron I. *Medieval popular culture: problems of belief and perception*. Transl. János M. Bak and Paul Hollingsworth. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1988.

Havelka, Miloš. "Spor o smyslu českých dějin, 1895-1938." *Spor o smyslu českých dějin*. Prague. Torst. 1997.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *The Philosophy of History*. transl. J. Sibree. New York. Dover. 1956.

Hobsbawm, Eric. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." *The Invention of Tradition*. ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1992.

Holy, Ladislav. *The little Czech and the great Czech nation: national identity and the post-communist transformation of Society*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1996.

Honzák, František, ed. *Kdo byl kdo v našich dějinách do roku 1918*. Prague. Libri. 1998.

Hrabal, Bohumil. *I Served the King of England*. transl. Paul Wilson. London. Picador. 1990.

———— *Closely Watched Trains*. transl. Edith Pargeler. New York. Grove Press. 1968.

———— *The Little Town Where Time Stood Still*. transl. James Naughton. London. Abacus. 1994.

Kimball, Stanley Buchholz. *Czech Nationalism: a Study of the National Theatre Movement, 1845-83*. Urbana. University of Illinois Press 1964.

Klima, Ivan. *The Spirit of Prague and other essays*. transl. Paul Wilson. London. Granta Books. 1994.

Kořalka, Jiří. "Historiogaphies of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Czechoslovakia." *The American Historical Review*. vol. 97, no. 4 (1992).

Kundera, Milan. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. transl. by Michael Henry Heim. Hammondsworth, England. Penguin Books. 1981

———— *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. transl. Michael Henry Heim. New York. Harper. 1985.

Macura, Vladimír. "Problems and Paradoxes of the National Revival."*Bohemia in History*. ed. Mikuláš Teich. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1998.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. transl. R. J. Hollingdale. Hammondsworth, England. Penguin Books. 1990.

Petráň, Josef and Petráňová, Lydia. "The White Mountain as a symbol in modern Czech history." *Bohemia in History*. 1998.

Rosdolsky, Roman. *Engels and the Nonhistoric Peoples: The National Question in the Revolution of 1848*. transl. and ed. John-Paul Himka. Cambridge. Critique Books. 1987.

Sayer, Derek. "Prague as a Vantage-Point on Modern European History." *METU Studies in Development*. vol. 22, no. 3 (1995).

———— "The Language of Nationality and the Nationality of Language: Prague 1780-1920." *Past and Present*, no. 151 (1996).

———— *The Coasts of Bohemia: a Czech history*. Princeton, New Jersey. Princeton University Press. 1998.

Škvorecký, Josef. "Bohemia of the Soul." *Daedalus*, vol. 119, no. 1, (1990).

———— *The Miracle Game*. transl. Paul Wilson. London. Faber and Faber. 1992.

Taylor, A. J. P. *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918: a History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*. London. Penguin Books. 1990.

Zacek, Josef F. "Metternich's Censors: The Case of Palacký." *The Czech Renascence of the Nineteenth Century*. Toronto. University of Toronto Press. 1970.